



The Jonathan Papers

By Elisabeth
Woodbridge.



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By

Elisabeth Woodbridge



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TO JONATHAN
AND TO ALL PERFECT COMRADESHIP
WHEREVER ITS JOYOUS SPIRIT IS FOUND
THIS LITTLE BOOK IS DEDICATED

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Foreword

On Taking One's Dessert First

WHEN we were children we used to "happen in" to the kitchen just before luncheon to see what the dessert was to be. This was because at the luncheon table we were not allowed to ask, yet it was advantageous to know, for since even our youthful capacity had its limits, we found it necessary to "save room," and the question, of course, was, how much room?

Discovering some favorite dish being prepared, we used to gaze with watering mouth, and, though knowing its futility, could seldom repress the plea, "May n't we have our dessert now?" Of course we never did, of course we waited, and of course, when that same dessert came to us, properly served, at the proper time, after a properly wholesome luncheon preceding, it found us expectant, perhaps, but not eager; appreciative, but not

enthusiastic. It was not to us what it would have been at the golden moment when we begged for it.

In hours of unbridled hostility to domestic conditions we used sometimes to plan for a future when we should be grown up, and then would we not change this sorry scheme of things entire! Would we not have a larder, with desserts in it, our favorite desserts — and would we not devour these same, boldly, recklessly, immediately before the meal for which they were intended! Just would n't we!

And afterward — just did n't we! Most youthful fancies are doomed to fade unrealized, but this one was too fundamentally practical and sane. We are grown up, we have a larder, with now and then toothsome desserts in it, and now and then we grip our conscience till it cowers and is still, we wait till the servants are out, we walk into our pantry — and then —

Yes, triumphant we still believe what once militant we maintained — that the only way to eat cake is when it is just out of the oven, that the only way to eat ice cream is to dip

it out of the freezer, down under the apple tree, in the mid-morning or mid-afternoon. Afterward, when it appears in sober decorum, surrounded by all the appurtenances of civilization, it is a very commonplace affair; out under the apple tree it is ambrosia.

Why not go further? Why not take all our desserts in life when they taste best, instead of at the proper time, when we don't care for them? Desserts are, I suppose, meant to be enjoyed. Why not have them when most enjoyable? I wonder if there is not a certain perverted conscientiousness that leads us to this enforcement of our pleasures. I am myself conscious that I can scarcely ever approach a pleasure with a mind singly bent on enjoyment. I regard it with something like suspicion, I hedge, I hesitate, I defer. What is the motive force here? Is it an inherited asceticism, bidding us beware of pleasure as such? Is it pride, which will not permit us to make unseemly haste toward our desires? Is it a subtle self-gratification, which seeks to add zest, tone, to our delights by postponing them? Is it fear of anticlimax, which makes us save our pleasure for the last thing, that

there may be no descent afterward? Certainly the last was the motive in the case of the little boy who, dining out, was given a piece of mince and one of custard pie. He liked the mince best, therefore he saved it until the last, and had just conscientiously finished the custard when his beaming hostess said: "Oh, you like the custard best! Well, dear, you need n't eat the other. Delia, bring another plate for Henry and I'll give him another piece of the custard pie." Pathetic! Yet I confess my sympathy with Henry has always been qualified by disapproval of his methods, which, it seems to me, brought down upon him an awful but not wholly undeserved penalty.

The incident is worth careful attention. For life, I believe, is continually treating us as that benevolent but misguided hostess treated the incomprehensible Henry. If we postpone our mince pie, it is often snatched from us and we never get it at all. I knew a youth once who habitually rode a bicycle that was too small for him. He explained that he continued to do this because then, when at same future time he did have one that fitted

him, he would be so surpassingly comfortable! Soon after, bicycles went out of fashion, and I fear the moment of supreme luxury never came. His mince pie had, as it were, been snatched from him. One of my friends wrote me once: "It seems to me I am always distractingly busy just getting ready to live, but I never really begin." Most of us are in the same plight. We are like the thrifty housewife who kept pushing the week's work earlier and earlier, until it backed up into the week before; yet with all her planning she never succeeded in clearing one little spot of leisure for herself. She never got her dessert at all. Probably she would not have enjoyed it if she had had it. For the capacity to enjoy desserts in life is something not to be trifled with. Children have it, and grown people can keep it if they try, but they don't always try. I knew of a man who worked every minute until he was sixty, getting rich. He did get rich. Then he retired; he built him a "stately pleasure palace," and set about taking his pleasure. And lo! he found that he had forgotten how! He tried this and that, indoor and outdoor pleasures, the social and the sol-

itary, the artistic and the semi-scientific — all to no purpose. Here were all the desserts that throughout his life he had been steadfastly pushing aside; they were ranged before him to partake of, and when he would partake he could not. And so he left his pleasure palace and went back to “business.”

We are not all so far gone as this, but few of us have the courage to take our desserts when they are offered, or the free spirit to enjoy them to the uttermost. I get up on a glorious summer morning and gaze out at the new day. With all the strongest and deepest instincts of my nature I long to go out into the green beauty of the world, to fling myself down in some sloping meadow and feel the sunshine envelop me and the warm winds pass over me, to see them tossing the grasses and tugging at the trees and driving the white clouds across the blue, and to feel the great earth revolving under me — for if you lie long enough you can really get the sense of sailing through space. All this I long for — from my window. Then I turn back to my unglorified little house — little, however big, compared with the limitless world of beauty outside —

and betake myself to my day's routine occupations. I read my mail, I answer letters, I go over accounts, I fly to the telephone and give orders and make engagements. And at length, after hours of such stultifying employment, I elect to call myself "free," and go forth to enjoy my "well-earned" leisure. Fool that I am! As if enjoyment were a thing to be taken up and laid down at will, like a walking-stick. As if one could let the golden moment pass and hope to find it again awaiting our convenience. Why can we not be like Pippa with her one precious day? But if she had been born in New England do you suppose her day would have been what it was? Would she have sprung up at daybreak with heart and mind all alight for pleasure? Certainly not. She would have spent the golden morning in cleaning the kitchen, and the golden afternoon in clearing up the attic, and would have gone out for a little walk after the supper dishes were washed, only because she thought she "ought" to take a little exercise in the open air.

Duty and work are all very well, but we have bound ourselves up in them so com-

pletely that we have almost lost the art of spontaneous enjoyment. We can feel comfortable or uncomfortable, annoyed or gratified, but we cannot feel simple, buoyant, instinctive enjoyment in anything. We take our very pleasures under the name of duties—"We ought to take a walk," "We ought not to miss that concert," "We ought to read" a certain book, "We ought" to go and see this friend, or invite that one to see us. Those things that should be our spontaneous pleasures we have clothed and masked until they no longer know themselves. A pleasure must present itself under the guise of a duty before we feel that we can wholly give ourselves over to it.

Ah, let us stop all that! Let us take our pleasures without apology. Let us give up this fashion of shoving them away into the left-over corners of our lives, covering their gleaming raiment with sad-colored robes, and visiting them with half-averted faces. Let us consort with them openly, gayly!

The Jonathan Papers

The Jonathan Papers

I

A Placid Runaway

JONATHAN and I differ about a great many things; how otherwise are we to avoid the sloughs of bigoted self-satisfaction? But upon one point we agree: we are both convinced that on a beautiful morning in April or May or June there is just one thing that any right-minded person really wants to do. That is to turn a deaf ear to duty and a blind eye to all other pleasures, and — find a trout brook. We are, indeed, able to understand that duty may be too much for him — may be quite indifferent to his deaf ear and shout in the other, or may even seize him by the shoulders and hold him firmly in his place. He may not be able so much as to drop a line in the brown water all through the maddening spring days. But that he should not want to — ache to — this we cannot understand. We do know that

it is not a thing to be argued about. It is temperamental, it is in the blood, or it is not. Jonathan and I always want to.

Once it was almost the end of April, and we had been wanting to ever since March had gone out like a lion — for in some parts of New England a jocose legislature has arranged that the trout season shall begin on April Fool's Day. Those who try to catch trout on April first understand the joke.

"Jonathan," I said over our coffee, "have you noticed the weather to-day?"

"Um-m-pleasant day," he murmured abstractedly from behind his newspaper.

"Pleasant! Have you felt the sunshine? Have you smelt the spring mud? I want to roll in it!"

Jonathan really looked up over his paper. "Do!" he said, benevolently.

"Jonathan, let's run away!"

"Can't. There's a man coming at —"

"I know. There's always a man coming. Tell him to come to-morrow. Tell him you are called out of town."

"But you have a lot of things to-day too

— book clubs and Japanese clubs and such things. You said last night —”

“I’ll tell them *I’m* called out of town too. I *am* called — we’re both called, you know we are. And we’ve got to go.”

“Really, my dear, you know I want to, but —”

“No use! It’s a runaway. Get the timetable and see which is the first train to anywhere — to nowhere — who cares where!”

Jonathan went, protesting. I let him protest. A man should have some privileges.

We took the first train. It was a local, of course, and it trundled jerkily along one of the little rivers we knew. When the conductor came to us, Jonathan showed him our mileage book. “Where to?” he asked mechanically, but stiffened to attention when Jonathan said placidly, “I don’t know yet. Where *are* we going, my dear?”

“I had n’t thought,” I said; “let’s see the places on the map.”

“Well, conductor,” said Jonathan, “take off for three stations, and if we don’t get off then, you’ll find us here when you come around, and then you can take off some more.”

The conductor looked us both over. We were evidently not a bridal couple, and we did n't look quite like criminals — he gave us up.

When we saw a bit of country that looked attractive, we got off. That was something I had always wanted to do. All my life I have had to go to definite places, and my memory is full of tantalizing glimpses of the charming spots I have passed on the road and could never stop to explore. This time we really did it. We left the little railway station, sitting plain and useful beside the track, went up the road past a few farmhouses, over a fence and across a soft ploughed field, and down to the little river, willow-bordered, shallow, golden-brown, with here and there a deep pool under an overhanging hemlock or a shelving, fretted, bush-tangled bank.

We sat down in the sun on a willow log and put our rods together. Does anything sound prettier than the whir and click of the reel as one pulls out the line for the first time on an April day? We sat and looked at the world for a little, and let the wind, with just the faint chill of the vanishing snows still in

it, blow over us, and the sun, that was making anemones and arbutus every minute, warm us through. It was almost too good to begin, this day that we had stolen. I felt like a child with a toothsome cake — “I’ll put it away for a while and have it later.”

But, after all, it was already begun. We had not stolen it, it had stolen us, and it held us in its power. Soon we wandered on, at first hastening for the mere joy of motion and the freshness of things; then, as the wind lessened and the sun shone hot in the hollows, loitering more and more, dropping a line here and there where a deep pool looked suggestive. Trout? Yes, we caught some. Jonathan pulled in a good many; I got enough to seem industrious. I seldom catch as many as Jonathan, though he tries to give me all the best holes; because really there are so many other things to attend to. Men seem to go fishing chiefly to catch fish. Jonathan spends half an hour working his rod and line through a network of bushes, briars, and vines, to drop it in a chosen spot in a pool. He swears gently as he works, but he works on, and usually gets his fish. I don’t swear, so I know I could

never carry through such an undertaking, and I don't try.

I did try once, when I was young and reckless. I headed the tip of my rod, like a lance in rest, for the most open spot I could see. For the fisherman's rule in the woods is not "Follow the flag," but "Follow your tip," and I tried to follow mine. This necessitated reducing myself occasionally to the dimensions of a filament, but I was elastic, and I persisted. The brambles neatly extracted my hat-pins and dropped them in the tangle about my feet; they pulled off my hat, but I pushed painfully forward. They tore at my hair; they caught an end of my tie and drew out the bow. Finally they made a simultaneous and well-planned assault upon my hair, my neck, my left arm, raised to push them back, and my right, extended to hold and guide that quivering, undulating rod. I was helpless, unless I wished to be torn in shreds. At that moment, as I stood poised, hot, baffled, smarting and stinging with bramble scratches, wishing I could swear like a man and have it out, the air was filled with the liquid notes of a wood thrush. I

love the wood thrush best of all; but that he should choose this moment! It was the final touch.

I whistled the blue-jay note, which means "Come," and Jonathan came threshing through the brush, having left his rod.

"Where are you?" he called; "I can't see you."

"No, you can't," I responded unamiably. "You probably never will see me again, at least not in any recognizable form. Help me out!" The thrush sang again, one tree farther away. "No! First kill that thrush!" I added between set teeth, as a slight motion of mine set the brambles raking again.

"Why, why, my dear, what's this?" Then, as he caught sight of me, "Well! You *are* tied up! Wait; I'll get out my knife."

He cut here and there, and one after another, with a farewell stab or scratch, the maddening things reluctantly let go their hold. Meanwhile Jonathan made placid remarks about the proper way to go through brush. "You go too fast, you know. You can't hurry these things," and you can't bully

them. I don't see how you manage to get scratched up so. I never do."

"Jonathan, you are as tactless as the thrush."

"Don't kill me yet, though. Wait till I cut this last fellow. There! Now you're free. By George! But you're a wreck!"

That was the last time I ever tried to "work through brush," as Jonathan calls it. If I can catch trout by any method compatible with sanity, I am ready to do it, but as for allowing myself to be drawn into a situation wherein the note of the wood thrush stirs thoughts of murder in my breast — at that point, I opine, sport ceases.

So on that day of our runaway I kept to open waters and preserved a placid mind. The air was full of bird notes — in the big open woods the clear "whick-ya, whick-ya, whick-ya" of the courting yellowhammers, in the meadows bluebirds with their shy, vanishing call that is over almost before you can begin to listen, meadowlarks poignantly sweet, song sparrows with a lift and a lilt and a carol, and in the swamps the red-wings trilling jubilant.

Noon came, and we camped under the sunny lee of a ridge that was all abloom with hepaticas — clumps of lavender and white and rosy-lilac. We found a good spring, and a fallen log, and some dead hemlock tips to start a fire, and soon we had a merry blaze. Then Jonathan dressed some of the trout, while I found a black birch tree and cut forked sticks for broilers. Any one who has not broiled fresh-caught trout outdoors on birch forks — or spice bush will do almost as well — has yet to learn what life holds for him. Chops are good, too, done in that way. We usually carry them along when there is no prospect of fish, or, when we are sure of our country, we take a tin cup and buy eggs at a farmhouse to boil. But the balancing of the can requires a happy combination of stones about the fire that the brief noonning of a day's tramp seldom affords, and baking is still more uncertain. Bacon is good, but broiling the little slices — and how they do shrink! — takes too long, while frying entails a pan. Curiously enough, a pan, in addition to two fish baskets and a landing-net, does not find favor in Jonathan's eyes.

After luncheon and a long, lazy rest on our log we went back to the stream and loitered down its bank. Pussy-willows, their sleek silver paws bursting into fat, caterpillary things, covered us with yellow pollen powder as we brushed past them. Now and then we were arrested by the sharp fragrance of the spice bush, whose little yellow blossoms had escaped our notice. In the damp hollows the ground was carpeted with the rich, mottled green leaves and tawny yellow bells of the adder's-tongue, and the wet mud was sweet with the dainty, short-stemmed white violets. On the dry, barren places were masses of saxifrage, bravely cheerful; on the rocky slopes fragile anemones blew in the wind, and fluffy green clumps of columbine lured us on to a vain search for an early blossom.

As the afternoon waned, and the wind freshened crisply, we guessed that it was milking-time, and wandered up to a farmhouse where we persuaded the farmer's wife to give us bread and cheese and warm new milk. We were urged to "set inside," but preferred to take the great white pitcher of milk out to the steps of the little back porch

where we could hear the insistent note of the little phoebe that was building under the eaves of the woodshed. Our hostess stood in the doorway, watching in amused tolerance as we filled and refilled our goblets. They were wonderful goblets, be it said — the best the house afforded. Jonathan's was of fancy green glass, all covered with little knobs; mine was yellow, with a head of Washington stamped on one side, and "God Bless our Country" on the other. Finally the good woman broke the silence — "Guess your mothers ain't never weaned ye." Which we were not in a position to refute.

On our return train we found the same conductor who had taken us out in the morning. As he folded back the green cover of our mileage book he could not forbear remarking, quizzically, "Know how far you're goin' to-night?"

"Jonathan," I said, as we settled to toast and tea before our home fireplace that evening, "I like running away. I don't blame horses."

II

An Unprogressive Farm

MOST of our friends, Jonathan's and mine, are occupying their summers in "reclaiming" old farms. We have an old farm, too, but we, I fear, are not reclaiming it, at least not very fast. We have made neither formal gardens nor water gardens nor rose arches; we have not built marble swimming-tanks, nor even cement ones; we have not naturalized forget-me-nots in the brook or narcissus in the meadows; we have not erected tea-houses on choice knolls, and after six years of occupancy there is still not a pergola or a sundial on the place! And yet we are happy.

To be happy on a farm like ours one must, I fancy, be either very old or very unprogressive. While we are waiting to grow comfortably old, we are willing to be considered unprogressive.

Very old and very, very unprogressive is the farm itself. There is nothing on it but

old apple trees, old lilac bushes, old rocks, and old associations —and, to be sure, the old red house. But the old rocks, piled on the hillsides, are unfailingly picturesque, whether dark and dripping in the summer rains or silver gray in the summer suns. The lilacs are delightful, too. In June they send wave upon wave of fragrance in through the little windows, penetrating even to the remotest corners of the dim old attic, while all day long about their pale lavender sprays the great yellow and black butterflies hang flutteringly. Best of all is the orchard; the old apple trees blossom prodigally for a brief season in May, blossom in rosy-white, in cream-white, in pure white, in green-white, transforming the lane and the hill-slopes into a bower, smothering the old house in beauty, brooding over it, on still moonlight nights, in pale clouds of sweetness. And then comes a wind, with a drenching rain, and tears away all the pretty petals and buries them in the grass below. But there are seldom any apples; all this exuberance of beauty is but a dream of youth, not a promise of fruitage. Jonathan, indeed, tells me that if we want the trees to bear we

must keep pigs in the orchard to root up the ground and eat the wormy fruit as it falls; but under these conditions I would rather not have the apples. The orchard is old; why not leave it to dream and rest and dream again?

The old associations are, I admit, of a somewhat mixed character. There is the romance of the milk-room door, through which, in hoary ages past, the "hired girl," at the ripe age of twelve, eloped with her sixteen-year-old lover; there is the story of the cellar nail, a shuddery one, handed down from a yet more remote antiquity; there are tales of the "ballroom" on the second floor, of the old lightning-riven locust stump, of the origin of the "new wing" of the house — still called "new," though a century old. Not a spot, indoors or out, but has its clustering memories.

Such an enveloping atmosphere of associations, no matter what their quality, in a place where generations have lived and died, is of itself a quieting thing. Life, incrusting with tradition, like a ship weighted with barnacles, moves more and more slowly; the past appears more real than the present. To the old

this seems natural and right, to others it is often depressing; but Jonathan and I like it. Our barnacle-clogged ship pleases us — pleases me because I love the slow, drifting motion, pleases Jonathan because — I regret to admit it — he thinks he can get all the barnacles off — and then! —

For, whereas my unprogressiveness is absolute and unqualified, Jonathan's is, I have discovered, tainted by a sneaking optimism, an ineradicable desire and hope of improvement, which, though it does not blossom rankly in pergolas and tea-houses, is none the less there, a lurking menace. It inspired his suggestion regarding pigs in the orchard, it showed itself even more clearly in the matter of the hens.

I have always liked hens. I doubt if mine are very profitable, — the farm is not, in general, a source of profit, and we cherish no delusions about it, — but I do not keep them for pecuniary gain. If they chance to lay eggs, so much the better; if they furnish forth my table with succulent broilers, with nutritious roasters, with ambrosial chicken-pasties, I am not unappreciative; but I realize that all

these things might be had from my neighbors' barnyards. What I primarily value my own hens for is their companionship. Talk about the companionship of dogs and cats! Cats walk about my home, sleek and superior; they make me feel that I am there on sufferance. One cannot even laugh at them, their manner is so perfect. Dogs, on the other hand, develop an unreasoning and tyrannous devotion to their masters, which is not really good for either, though it may be morbidly gratifying to sentimental natures.

But hens! No decorous superiority here, no mush of devotion. No; for varied folly, for rich and highly developed perversities, combining all that is choicest of masculine and feminine foible — for this and much more, commend me to the hen. Ever since we came to the farm, my sister the hen has entertained me with her vagaries. Jaques's delight at his encounter with Touchstone is pale compared with mine in their society. Nothing cheers me more than to sit on a big rock in the barnyard and watch the hens walking about. Their very gait pleases me — the way they bob their heads, the "genteel" way they have

of picking up their feet, for all the world as though they cared where they stepped; the absent and superior manner in which they "scratch for worms," their gaze fixed on the sky, then cock their heads downwards with an indifferent air, absently pick up a chip, drop it, and walk on! Did any one ever see a hen really find a worm? I never did. There are no worms in our barnyard, anyhow; Jonathan must have dug them all up for bait when he was a boy. I have even tried throwing some real worms to them, and they always respond by a few nervous cackles, and walk past the brown wrigglers with a detached manner, and the robins get them later. And yet they continue to go through all these forms, and we continue to call it "scratching for worms."

Jonathan has nothing to do with my hens except to give advice. One of his hobbies is the establishing of a breed of hens marked by intelligence, which he maintains might be done by careful selection of the mothers. Accordingly, whenever he goes to the roost to pick out a victim for the sacrificial hatchet, he first gently pulls the tail of each candidate

in turn, and by the dim light of the lantern carefully observes the nature of their reaction, choosing for destruction the one whose deportment seems to him most foolish. In this way, by weeding out the extremely silly, he hopes in time to raise the general intellectual standard of the barnyard. But he urges that much more might be done if my heart were in it. Very likely, but my heart is not. Intelligence is all very well, but the barnyard, I am convinced, is no place for it. Give me my pretty, silly hens, with all their aimless, silly ways. I will seek intelligence, when I want it, elsewhere.

In another direction, too, Jonathan's optimistic temperament has found little encouragement. This is in regard to the chimney swallows. When we first came, these little creatures were one of my severest trials. They were not a trial to Jonathan. He loved to watch them at dusk, circling and eddying about the great chimney. So, indeed, did I; and if they had but contented themselves with circling and eddying there, I should have had no quarrel with them. I did not even object to their evolutions inside the chimney.

At first I took the muffled shudder of wings for distant thunder, and when great masses of soot came tumbling down into the fireplace, I jumped; but I soon grew accustomed to all this. I was even willing to clean the soot out of my neat fireplace daily, while Jonathan comforted me by suggesting that the birds took the place of chimney-sweeps, and that soot was good for rose bushes. Yes, if the little things had been willing to stick to their chimney, I should have been tolerant, if not cordial. But when they invaded my domain, I felt that I had a grievance. And invade it they did. At dawn I was rudely awakened by a rush from the fireplace, a mad scuttering about the dusky room, a desperate exit by the little open window, where the raised shade revealed the pale light of morning. At night, if I went with my candle into a dark room, I was met by a whirling thing, dashing itself against me, against the light, against the walls, in a moth-like ecstasy of self-destruction. In the mornings, as I went about the house pulling up the shades and drawing back the curtains, out from their white folds rushed dark, winged shapes, whirring past my ears,

fluttering blindly about the room, sinking exhausted in inaccessible corners. They were as foolish as June bugs, fifty times bigger, and harder to catch. Moreover, when caught, they were not pretty; their eyes were in the top of their heads, like a snake's, their expression was low and cunning. They were almost as bad as bats! Worst of all, the young birds had an untidy habit of tumbling out of the nests down into the fireplaces, whether there was a fire or not. Now, I have no conscientious objection to roasting birds, but I prefer to choose my birds, and to kill them first.

One morning I had gathered and carried out of doors eight foolish, frightened, huddling things, and one dead young one from the sitting-room embers, and I returned to find Jonathan kneeling on the guest-room hearth, one arm thrust far up the chimney. "What *are* you doing, Jonathan?" The next moment there was the familiar rush of wings, which finally subsided behind the fresh pillows of the bed. Jonathan sprang up. "Wait! I'll get it!" He carefully drew away the pillow, his hand was almost on the poor little quivering wretch, when it made another

rush, hurled itself against the mirror, upset a vase full of columbines, and finally sank behind the wood-box. At last it was caught, and Jonathan, going over to the hearth, resumed his former position. "Jonathan! Put him out of doors!" I exclaimed. "Sh-h-h," he responded, "I'm going to teach him to go back the way he came. There he goes! see?" He rose, triumphant, and began to brush the soot out of his collar and hair. I was sorry to dash such enthusiasm, but I felt my resolution hardening within me.

"Jonathan," I said, "we did not come to the farm to train chimney swallows. Besides, I don't wish them trained, I wish them *kept out*. I don't regard them as suitable for household pets. If you will sink to a pet bird, get a canary."

"But you would n't have an old house without chimney swallows!" he remonstrated in tones of real pain.

"I would indeed."

It ended in a compromise. At the top of the chimney Jonathan put a netting over half the flues; the others he left open at the top, but set in nettings in the corresponding flues

just above each fireplace. And so in half the chimney the swallows still build, but the young ones now drop on the nettings instead of in the embers, and lie there cheeping shrilly until somehow their parents or friends convey them up again where they belong. And I no longer spend my mornings collecting apronfuls of frightened and battered little creatures. At dusk the swallows still eddy and circle about the chimney, but Jonathan has lost the opportunity for training them. Once more the optimist is balked.

But in these matters I am firm: I do not want the hens made intelligent, or the orchard improved, or the swallows trained. There is, I am sure, matter enough in other parts of the farm upon which one may wreak one's optimism. I hold me to my tidy hearths, my comfortable hens, my old lilacs, and my dreaming apple trees.

III

A Desultory Pilgrimage

MANY of our friends seem to be taking automobile trips during the summer months — very rapid trips, since, as they explain, “it strains the machine to go too slowly, you know.” Jonathan and I wanted to take a trip too, and we looked about us on the old farm for a conveyance. The closest scrutiny failed to discover an automobile, but there were other vehicles — there was the old sleigh in the back of the woodshed, where the hens loved to steal nests, and the old surrey, shabby but willing, and the business wagon, still shabbier but no less willing; there were the two lumber wagons, one rather more lumbering than the other; and there were also various farming vehicles whose names and uses I have never fathomed, with knives and long raking arrangements, very uncomfortable to step over when hunting in the dark corners of the barns for hens’ nests or new kittens.

Moreover, there was Kit, the old bay mare, also shabby but willing. That is, willing "within reason," although it must be admitted that Kit's ideas of what was reasonable were distinctly conservative. The chief practical difference between Kit and an automobile, considered as a motive power, was that it did not strain Kit in the least to go slowly. This we considered an advantage, slow-going being what we particularly wished, and we decided that Kit would do.

For our conveyance we chose the business wagon — a plain box body, with a seat across and room behind for a trunk; but in addition Jonathan put in a shallow box under the seat, nailed to cleats on the bottom of the wagon so that it would not shift and rain would run under it. In this we put the things we needed by the roadside — the camping-kit, drinking-cups, bait-boxes, camera, and so on. Then we stowed our trout rods and baskets, and one morning in June we started.

Our plan was to drive and fish through the day, cook our own noon meal, and put up at night wherever we could be taken in, avoiding cities and villages as far as possible. Be-

yond that we had no plan. Indeed, this was the best of it all, that we did not have to get anywhere in particular at any particular time. We did not decide on one day where we would go the next; we did not even decide in the morning where we would go in the afternoon. If we found a brook where the trout bit, and there was no inhospitable "poster" warning us away, we said, "Let's stay! who cares whether we get on or not?" And we tied Kit to a tree, took out our rods and baskets, and followed the brook. If noon found us still fishing, we came back to the wagon, fed Kit, got out our camping-outfit, and cooked our fish for luncheon. It did not take long. I collected kindling and firewood while Jonathan was laying a few big stones for a fireplace shaped like a squared letter "C," open towards the wind and big enough to hold our frying-pan. Then we started the fire, and while it was settling into shape Jonathan dressed the fish and cut a long stick to fit into the hollow handle of the frying-pan, and I had time to slice bits of pork and set out the rest of the luncheon — bread and butter, milk if we happened to have passed a dairy farm, a

pineapple or oranges if we happened to have met a peddler, strawberries if we had chanced upon one of the sandy spots where the wild ones grow so thickly.

Then the pan was set over, the pork was laid in, and soon the little fish were curling up their tails in the fragrant smoke. If they were big and needed long cooking, I had time to toast bread or biscuit in the embers underneath for an added luxury, and when all was ready we sat down in supreme contentment. And we never forgot to give Kit a lump of sugar, or some clover tops, that she might share in the picnic. But every now and then she would turn and regard us with eyes that expressed many things, but chiefly wonder at the queerness of folks who could prefer not to go back to their own stable to eat. When luncheon was over, the dishes washed in the brook, and the wagon repacked, we ambled on, leaving our little fireplace, with its blackened stones and its heart of gray ashes.

No one who has never tried such an aimless life can realize its charm and its restfulness. Most of us spend our days catching trains, and running to the telephone, and meeting

engagements. Even our pleasures are seldom emancipated from these requirements; they are dependent on boats and trolley cars and trains, they are measured out in hours and minutes, and we snatch them running, as the Israelites did their water. But this trip of ours was bounded only by the circle of the week, and conditioned only by the limitations of Kit. No one could telephone to us, even at night, because no one knew where we were to be. As for trains, we never once saw one. Now and then we heard one whistle, so far away that it merely emphasized its own remoteness, and a few times we were compelled to cross over or under a track — a very little track, and single at that; beyond this our connection with the symbol of Hurry did not go.

The limitations of Kit were indeed definite and insurmountable. While her speed on a level was most moderate, uphill it was actually glacial, and going downhill it was little better. For Kit had come from the level West, and being, as we have said, conservative, she could never reach any real understanding of hills. She was willing and conscientious, but prudent, and although she went downhill

when she was requested to, she did it very much as an old lady might go down a precipice — she let herself down, half sitting, with occasional gentle groans, rocking from side to side like a boat in a chop sea. Now all New England is practically either uphill or downhill, and, if we had been in any haste, these characteristics of Kit might have annoyed us; but inasmuch as we did not care where we went or when we got there, what difference did it make? In fact, it was rather a relief to be thus firmly bound to sobriety.

In one respect we could not be absolutely irresponsible, however. We found it advisable to seek out our night's lodging while it was yet light enough for the farmer's wife to look us over and see that we were respectable. Our first night out we failed to realize this, and we paid for it by being forced to put up at a commonplace village inn, instead of a farmhouse. After that we managed to begin our search for a hostess about milking-time, and we had little further trouble. Indeed, one of the pleasures of the week was the hospitality we received; and our opinion of the New England farmer, his wife and his children,

grew higher as the days passed. Courteous hospitality, or, if hospitality had to be withheld, courteous regret, was the rule. Twice, when one house could not take us in, they telephoned — for the telephone is everywhere now — about the neighborhood among friends until they found a lodging for us. And pleasant lodgings they always proved.

One exception there was. We drew up one afternoon by a well-kept little house with a good English name on the post-box, and, as usual, I held the reins while Jonathan went up to the side door to make inquiries. After he had started up the path I saw, from my vantage-point, the lady of the farm returning from her "garden patch," and my heart went out in pity to Jonathan. If I could have called him back I would have done so, merely on the testimony of the lady's gait and figure. I had never fully realized how expressive these could be. Her hips, her shoulders, the set of her head, the way she planted her feet on the uneven flagging-stones of the path, each heavy line and each sodden motion, bespoke inhospitality, intolerance, impenetrable disapproval of everything unfamiliar. I watched

Jonathan turn back from the door at the sound of her steps, and in the short colloquy that followed, though I could hear nothing, I could see those hips and shoulders settling themselves yet more decisively, while Jonathan's attitude grew more studiously courteous. But when he had lifted his hat again and turned from that monument of immobile unpleasantness I saw his face relax into lines, partly of amusement, partly of chagrin; and as he took his seat beside me and drove on, he murmured snatches of quotation — "No; could n't possibly," "No; don't know anybody that could," "No; never did such a thing," "No; the people in the next house 've just had a funeral; sure *they* could n't"; and finally he broke into a chuckle as he quoted, "Well, there *is* some folks about two mile down might mebbe take ye; they does sometimes harbor peddlers 'n' such like." Jonathan was hardly willing to try again so near by; he regarded the whole neighborhood as tainted. Yet it was little more than two miles beyond, on that same afternoon, that we found lodgings with the most delightful, the most hospitable friends of all — for friends

they became, taking us into their circle as if we belonged to it by right of birth, coddling us as one ought never to expect to be coddled save by one's own mother or grandmother.

Ostensibly, our drive was a trout-fishing trip, and part of the fun certainly was the fishing. Not that we caught so many. If we had seriously wished to make a score, we might better have stayed at home and fished in our own haunts, where we knew every pool and just how and when to fish it. But it was interesting to explore new brooks, and as we never failed to get enough trout for at least one meal a day, what more could we wish? And such brooks! New England is surely the land of beautiful brooks. They are all lovely — the meadow brooks, gliding silently beneath the deep-tufted grasses, where the trout live in shadow even at noonday, and their speckled flanks are dark like the pools they lie in; the pasture brooks, whose clear water is always golden from the yellow sand and pebbles and leaves it ripples over, and the trout are silvery and pale-spotted; the brooks of the deep woods, where the foam of rapids and the spray of noisy little waterfalls alternate with the

stillness of rock-bound, hemlock-shadowed pools. All the brooks we followed, whether with good luck or with bad, I remember with delight. No, all except one. But I do not blame the brook.

It happened in this way: One Monday morning, after an abstemious Sunday, the zeal of Jonathan brought us forth at dawn — in fact, a little before dawn. I had consented, because, although my zeal compared to Jonathan's is as a flapping hen compared to a soaring eagle, yet I reflected that I should enjoy the sunrise and the early bird-songs. We emerged, therefore, in the dusk of young morning, and I had my first reward in a lovely view of meadows half-veiled in silvery mist, where the brook wound, and upland pastures of pale gray-green against ridges of shadowy woods. But I was not prepared for the sensation produced by the actual plunge into those same meadows. I say plunge advisedly. I shiver yet as I recall the icy chill of that dew-drenched grass. It was worse than wading a brook, because there was no reaction. Jonathan, however, did not seem depressed by it, so I followed his eager steps without remark.

We reached the brook, we put our rods together, and baited. "Crawl, now," admonished Jonathan; "they're shy fellows in those open pools." We crawled, dropped in, and waited. My teeth were chattering, my lips felt blue, but I would not be beaten by a little wet grass. After a few casts, Jonathan murmured, "That's funny," and moved cautiously on to the next pool. Then he tried swift water, then little rapids. I proceeded in chilly meekness, glad of a chance at a little exercise now and then when we had to climb around rocks or over a stone wall. Occasionally I straightened up and gazed out over the meadows — those clammy meadows — and up toward the high woods, brightening into the deep greens of daylight. The east was all rose and primrose, but I found myself unable to think of the sun as an æsthetic feature; I longed for its good, honest heat. A stove, or a hot soapstone, would have done as well.

After a quarter of a mile of this I ventured a remark — "Jonathan, you have often told me of the delights of dawn fishing." Jonathan was extricating his line from an alder bush, and did not answer. I could not resist adding,

"I *think* you said that the trout — bit — at dawn." Continued silence warned me that I had said enough, and I tactfully changed the subject: "What I am sorry for is the birds' nests up in those fields. How do the eggs ever hatch — in ice water! And how do the strawberries ever ripen, in cold storage every night — ugh! Let's go back and get some hot coffee and go to bed!"

And that is my one experience with dawn fishing. But Jonathan, reacting from the experience with the temper of the true enthusiast, still maintains that trout do bite at dawn. Perhaps they do. But for me, no more early-dewy meadows, except to look at.

Those hours of dawn fishing were the hardest work I did during the week. A lazy week, in truth, and an irresponsible one. Every one who can should snatch such a week and see what it does for him. In some ways it was better than camping, because camping, unless you have guides, is undoubtedly hard work, especially if you keep moving — work that one would never grudge, yet hard work nevertheless. The omitting of the night camp cut out practically all the work and made it more

comfortable for the horse, while our noon camps made us independent all day, and gave us that sense of being at home outdoors that one never gets if one has to run to cover for every meal.

And, curiously enough, the spots that seem homelike to me, as I linger in memory among the scenes of that week, are not the places where we spent the nights, pleasant though they were, but rather the spots where we built our little fireplaces. Each was for an hour our hearth-fire, — our own, — and I do not forget them, — some beside the open road, one on a ridge where the sun slants across as it goes down among purpling hills; one in the deep woods, by a little trout brook, where the sound of running water never ceases; one in an open grove by the river we love best, where a tiny brook with brown pools full of the shadowy trout empties its cold waters into the big, warm current. Perhaps no one else may notice them, but they are there, waiting for us, if haply we may pass that way again. And if we do, we shall surely pause and give them greeting. /

IV

The Yellow Valley

WE were on our way to the Yellow Valley. We had been pushing against the wind, through the red March mud of a ploughed field. Mud is a very good thing in its place, and if its place is not a ploughed field in March, I know of no better. But it does not encourage lightness of foot. At an especially big and burly gust of wind I stopped, turned my back for respite, and dropped into the lee of Jonathan. Wind is a good thing, too, in its place, but one does not care to drown in it.

“Jonathan,” I gasped, “this is n’t spring; it’s winter of the most furious description. Let’s reform the calendar and put up signs to warn the flowers. But I want my spring! I want it now!”

“Well,” said Jonathan, “there it is. Look!” And he pointed across the brush of the near fence line, where a meadow stretched away, brown with the stubble and matted tangle of

last year's grass. Halfway up the springy slope, in a little fold of the hillside, was a shimmer of green — vivid, wonderful.

I forgot the wind. "Oh-h! Think of being a cow now and eating that! Eating spring itself!"

"If you were a cow," said Jonathan, with the usual masculine command of applicable information, "they would n't let you eat it."

"They would n't! Why not? Does it make them sick?"

"No; crazy."

"Crazy!"

"Just that. Crazy for grass. They won't touch hay any more, and there is n't enough grass for them — and there you are!"

"Did you make that up as you went along, Jonathan?"

"Ask any farmer."

But I think I will not ask a farmer. He might say it was not true, and I like to think it is. I am sorry the cows cannot have their grass, but glad they have the good taste to refuse hay. I should, if I were a cow. Not being one, I do not need an actual patch of green nibble to set me crazy. The smell of the

earth after a thaw, a breath of soft air, a wave of delicious sweetness, in April, in March, in February, — when it comes in January I harden my heart and try not to notice, — this is enough to spoil me for the dry fodder of winter. Hay may be good and wholesome, but I have had my taste of spring grass, and it is enough. That or nothing. No more hay for me!

What that strange sweetness of the early spring is I have never fully discovered. The fragrance of flowers is in it, — hepaticas, white violets, arbutus, — yet it is none of these. It comes before any of the flowers are even astir, when the arbutus buds are still tight little green points, when the hepaticas have scarcely pushed open their winter sheaths, while their soft little gray-furred heads are still tucked down snugly, like a bird's head under its wing. Before even the snowdrops at our feet and the maples overhead have thought of blossoming, a soft breath may blow across our path filled with this wondrous fragrance. It is like a dream of May. One might believe the fairies were passing by.

For years I was completely baffled by it. But one March, in the farm orchard, I found out part of the secret. I was planting my sweet peas, when the well-remembered and bewildering fragrance blew across me. I sprang up and ran up the wind, and there, in the midst of the old orchard, I came upon an old apple tree just cut down by the thrift of Jonathan's farmer, who has no silly weakness for old apple trees. The fresh-cut wood was moist with sap, and as I bent over it — ah, there it was! Here were my hepaticas, my arbutus, here in the old apple tree! Such a surprise! I sat down beside it to think it over. I was sorry it was cut down, but glad it had told me its secret before it was made into logs and piled in the woodshed. Blazing in the fireplace it would tell me many things, but it might perhaps not have told me that.

And so I knew part of the secret. But only part. For the same fragrance has blown to me often where there were no orchards and no newly felled apple trees, and I have never, except this once, been able to trace it. If it is the flowing sap in all trees, why are not the

spring woods full of it? But they are not full of it; it comes only now and then, with tantalizing capriciousness. Do sound trees exhale it, certain kinds, when the sap starts, or must they have been cut or bruised, if not by the axe, perhaps by the winter winds and the ice storms? I do not know. I only know that when that breath of sweetness comes, it is the very breath of spring itself; it is the call of spring out of winter — spring grass.

When the call of the spring grass comes, there is always one spot that draws me with a special insistence, and every year we have much the same talk about it.

“Jonathan,” I say, “let’s go to the Yellow Valley.”

“Why,” says Jonathan, “there will be more new birds up on the ridge.”

“I don’t care about new birds. The old ones do very well for me.”

“And you might find the first hepaticas under Indian Rock.”

“I know. We’ll go there next.”

“And if we went farther up the river, we might see some black duck.”

“Very likely; but I don’t feel as if I particularly had to see black duck to-day.”

“What do you have to see?”

“Nothing special. Just plain spring.”

That is the charm of the Yellow Valley. It offers no spectacular inducements, no bargain-counter attractions in the shape of new arrivals among the birds or flowers. One returns from it with no trophies of any kind, nothing to put down in one’s notebook, if one keeps a notebook, — from which industry may I be forever preserved! But it is a place to go to and be quiet, which is good for us all, especially in the springtime, when there is so much going on in the world, and especially lately, since “nature study” has driven people into being so unceasingly busy when they are outdoors. Opera-glasses and bird books have their place, no doubt, in the advance of mankind, but they often seem to me nothing but more machinery coming in between us and the real things. Perhaps it was once true that when people went out to view “nature,” they did not see enough. Now, I fancy, they see too much; they cannot see the spring for the birds. Their motto is that of Rikki-Tikki,

the mongoose, "Run and find out" — an excellent motto for a mongoose, — but for people on a spring ramble !

The unquenchable ardor of the bird lover, so called, fills me with dismay. One enthusiast, writing in a school journal, describes the difficulties of following up the birds: "Often eyes all around one's head, with opera-glasses focused at each pair, would not suffice to keep the restless birds in view." If this is the ideal of the bird lover, it is not mine. I wonder she did not wish for extra pairs of legs to match each set of eyes and opera-glasses, and a divisible body, so that she might scamper off in sections after all these marvels. For myself, one pair of eyes gives me, I find, all the satisfaction and delight I know what to do with, and I cannot help feeling that, if I had more, I should have less. The same writer speaks of the "maddening" warbler notes. Why maddening? Because, forsooth, there are thirty warblers, and one cannot learn all their names. What a pity to be maddened by a little warbler! And about a matter of names, too. After all, the bird, the song, is the thing. And it seems a pity to carry the chasing of bird

notes quite so far. They are meant, I feel sure, to be hearkened to in quietness of spirit, to be tasted delicately, as one would a wine. The life of the opera-glassed bird hunter, compared to mine, seems to me like the experience of a tea-taster compared to that of one who sits in cozy and irresponsible enjoyment of the cup her friend hands her.

And so there always comes a time in the spring when I must go to my Yellow Valley. A car ride, a walk on through plain little suburbs, a scramble across fields to a seldom-used railway track, a swing out along the ties, then off across more fields, over a little ridge, and — there! Oh, the soft glory of color! We are at the west end of a miniature valley, full of afternoon sunlight slanting across a level blur of yellows and browns. On one side low brown hills enfold it, on the other runs a swift little river, whose steep farther bank is overhung with hemlocks and laurel in brightening spring green. It is a very tiny valley, — one could almost throw a stone across it, — and the whole bottom is filled with waving grass, waist-high, of a wonderful pale straw color; last year's grass, which the winter snows

never seem to mat down, thick-set with the tall brown stalks of last year's goldenrod and mullein and primrose. The trees and bushes are dwarf oaks, with their old leafage still clinging in tawny masses, and willows, with their bunches of slim, yellow shoots. Even the little river is yellow-brown, from the sand and pebbles and leaves of its bed, and the sun, as it slants down the length of the valley, wraps it in a warm, yellow haze.

I call the valley mine, for no one else seems to know it. The long grass is never cut, but left to wave its glory of yellow all through the fall and winter and spring. There is a little footpath running through it, but I never see any one on it. I often wonder who makes all the footpaths I know, where no one ever seems to pass. Is it rabbits, or ghosts? Whoever they may be, in this case they do not trouble me, and the valley is as much mine as though I had cut it out of a mediæval romance.

It is always very quiet here. At least it seems so, though full of sound, as the world always is. But its sounds are its own; perhaps that is the secret; the rustle of the oak leaves as the wind fumbles among them; the swish-

swish of the long dry grasses, which can be heard only if one sits down in their midst, very still; the light, purling sounds of the river; the soft gush of water about some bending branch as its tip catches and drags in the shifting current. The winds lose a little of their fierceness as they drop into the valley, and they seem to have left behind them all the sounds of the outer world which they usually bear. If now and then they waft hitherward the long call of a locomotive, they soften it till it is only a dreamy reminder.

It is strange that in a spot so specially full of the tokens of last year's life, — the dry grasses, the old oak leaves not yet pushed off by the new buds, — where the only green is of the hemlocks and laurels that have weathered the winter, — it is strange that in such a spot one should feel the immanence of spring. Perhaps it is the bluebird that does it. For it is the bluebird's valley as well as mine. There are other birds there, but not many, and it is the bluebird which best voices the spirit of the place. Most birds in the spring imply an audience. The song sparrow, with the lift and the lilt of his song, sings to the

universe; the red-wing calls to all the sunny world to be gleeful with him; the long-drawn sweetness of the meadowlark floats over broad meadows and wide horizons; the bobolink, in the tumbling eagerness of his jubilation, is for every one to hear. But the blue-bird sings to himself. His gentle notes, not heard but overheard, are for those who listen softly. And in the Yellow Valley he is at home.

I am at home, too, and I find there something that I find nowhere else so well. Its charm is in the simpleness of its appeal: —

“Only the mightier movement sounds and passes,
Only winds and rivers —”

I bring back from it a memory of sunshine and grass, bird notes and running water, the broad realities of nature. Nay, more than a memory — a mood that holds — a certain poise of spirit that comes from a sense of the largeness and sweetness and sufficiency of the whole live, growing world. Spring grass — the rare fragrance of the spring air — is the call. The Yellow Valley holds the answer.

V

Larkspurs and Hollyhocks

“JONATHAN, let’s not have a garden.”

“What ’ll we live on if we don’t?”

“Oh, of course, I don’t mean that kind of a garden, — peas and potatoes and things, — I mean flowers. Let’s not have a flower garden.”

“That seems easy enough to manage,” he ruminated; “the hard thing would be to have one.”

“I know. And what’s the use? There are always flowers enough, all around us, from May till October. Let’s just enjoy them.”

“I always have.”

I looked at him to detect a possible sarcasm in the words, but his face was innocent.

“Well, of course, so have I. But what I mean is — people when they have a country place seem to spend such a lot of energy doing things for themselves that nature is doing for them just over the fence. There was Christa-

bel Vincent last summer, grubbing over yellow lilies, or something, and I went over into the meadow and got a lovely armful of lilies and brought them in, and no grubbing at all."

"Perhaps grubbing was what she was after," said Jonathan.

"Well, anyway, she talked as if it was lilies."

"I don't know that that matters," he said.

Jonathan is sometimes so acute about my friends that it is almost annoying.

This conversation was one of many that occurred the winter before we took up the farm. We went up in April that year, and we planted our corn and our potatoes and all the rest, but no flowers. That part we left to nature, and she responded most generously. From earliest spring until October — nay, November — we were never without flowers: brave little white saxifrage and hepaticas, first of all, then bloodroot and arbutus, adder's-tongue and columbine, shad-blow and dogwood, and all the beloved throng of them, at our feet and overhead. In May the pink azalea and the buttercups, in June the

laurel and the daisies and — almost best of all — the dear clover. In summer the deep woods gave us orchids, and the open meadows lilies and black-eyed Susans. In September the river-banks and the brooks glowed for us with cardinal-flower and the blue lobelia, and then, until the frosts settled into winter, there were the fringed gentians and the asters and the goldenrod. And still the half has not been told. If I tried to name all that gay company, my tale would be longer than Homer's catalogue of the ships.

In early July a friend brought me in a big bunch of sweet peas. I buried my face in their sweetness; then, as I held them off, I sighed.

"Oh, dear!" I said.

"What's 'oh, dear'?" said Jonathan, as he took off his ankle-clips. He had just come up from the station on his bicycle.

"Nothing. Only why do people have magenta sweet peas with red ones and pink ones — that special pink? It's just the color of pink tooth-powder."

"You might throw away the ones you don't like."

"No, I can't do that. But why does any-

body grow them? If I had sweet peas, I'd have white ones, and pale lavender ones, and those lovely salmon-pink ones, and maybe some pale yellow ones —"

"Sweet peas have to be planted in March," said Jonathan, as he trundled his wheel off toward the barn.

"Of course," I called after him. "I'm not *going* to plant any. I was only saying *if*."

Perhaps the sweet peas began it, but I really think the whole thing began with the phlox.

One afternoon in August I walked down the road through the woods to meet Jonathan. As he came up to me and dismounted I held out to him a spray of white phlox.

"Where do you suppose I found it?" I asked.

"Down by the old Talcott place," he hazarded.

"No. There is some there, but this was growing under our crab-apple trees, right beside the house."

"Well, now, it must have been some of Aunt Deborah's. I remember hearing Uncle Ben say she used to have her garden there;

that must have been before he started the crab orchard. Why, that phlox can't be less than forty years old, anyway."

"Dear me!" I took back the delicate spray; "it does n't look it."

"No. Don't you wish you could look like that when you're forty?" he philosophized; and added, "Is there much of it?"

"Five or six roots, but there won't be many blossoms, it's so shady."

"We might move it and give it a chance."

"Let's! We'll dig it up this fall, and put it over on the south side of the house, in that sunny open place."

When October came, we took Aunt Deborah's phlox and transplanted it to where it could get the sunshine it had been starving for all those years. I sat on a stump and watched Jonathan digging the holes.

"You don't suppose Henry will cut them down for weeds when they come up, do you?" I said.

"Seems probable," said Jonathan. "You might stick in a few bulbs that'll come up early and mark the spot."

"Oh, yes. And we could put a line of sweet

alyssum along each side, to last along after the bulbs are over."

"You can do that in the spring if you want to. I'll bring up some bulbs to-morrow."

The winter passed and the spring came — sweet, tormenting.

"Jonathan," I said at luncheon one day, "I got the sweet alyssum seed this morning."

"Sweet alyssum?" He looked blank. "What do you want sweet alyssum for? It's a foolish flower. I thought you were n't going to have a garden, anyway."

"I'm not; but don't you remember about the phlox? We said we'd put in some sweet alyssum to mark it—so it would n't get cut down."

"The bulbs will do that, and when they're gone it will be high enough to show."

"Well, I have the seed, and I might as well use it. It won't do any harm."

"No. I don't believe sweet alyssum ever hurt anybody," said Jonathan.

That evening when he came in I met him in the hall. I had the florist's catalogue in

my hand. "Jonathan, it says English daisies are good for borders."

"Borders! What do you want of borders?"

"Why, up on the farm — the phlox, you know."

"Oh, the phlox. I thought you had sweet alyssum for a border."

He took off his coat and I drew him into the study.

"Why, yes, but that was such a little package. I don't believe there would be enough. And I thought I could try the English daisies, too, and if one did n't do well perhaps the other would. And look what it says — No, never mind the newspaper yet — there is n't any news — just look at this about pansies."

"Pansies! You don't want *them* for a border!"

"Why, no, not exactly. But, you see, the phlox won't blossom till late August, and it says that if you plant this kind of pansies very early, they blossom in June, and then if you cover them they live over and blossom again the next May. And pansies are so lovely! Look at that picture! Don't you love those French-blue ones?"

"I like pansies. I don't know about the nationalities," said Jonathan. "Of course, if you want to bother with them, go ahead." He picked up his paper.

"Oh, it won't be any bother. They take care of themselves. Please, your pencil — I'm going to mark the colors I want."

We went up soon after to look at the farm. We found it very much as we had left it, except that there hung about it that indescribable something we call spring. We tramped about on the spongy ground, and sniffed the sweet air, and looked at the apple buds, and kicked up the soft, matted maple leaves to see the grass starting underneath.

"Oh, Jonathan! Our bulbs!" I exclaimed. We hurried over to them and lifted up the thick blanket of leaves and hay we had left over them. "Look! A crocus!" I said.

"And here's a snowdrop! Let's take off these leaves and give them a chance."

"Dear me!" I sighed; "is n't it wonderful? To think those hard little bullets we put in last fall should do all this! And here's the phlox just starting — look—"

"Oh, you can't kill phlox," said Jonathan imperturbably.

"All the better. I hate not giving people credit for things just because they come natural."

"That is a curious sentence," said Jonathan.

"Never mind. You know what I mean. You've understood a great many more curious ones than that. Listen, Jonathan. Why could n't I put in my seeds now? I brought them along."

"Why — yes — it's pretty early for anything but peas, but you can try, of course. What are they? Sweet alyssum and pansy?"

"Yes — and I did get a few sweet peas too," I hesitated. "I thought Henry had n't much to do yet, and perhaps he could make a trench — you know it needs a trench."

"Yes, I know," said Jonathan. I think he smiled. "Let's see your seeds."

"They're at the house. Come over to the south porch, where it's warm, and we'll plan about them."

I opened the bundle and laid out the little packets with their gay pictures indicating what the seeds within might be expected to

do. "Sweet alyssum and pansies," I said, "and here are the sweet peas."

Jonathan took them — "'Dorothy Eckford, Lady Grisel Hamilton, Gladys Unwin, Early Dawn, White Spencer.' By George! you mean to keep Henry busy! Here's ten ounces of peas!"

"They were so much cheaper by the ounce," I murmured.

"And — hold up! Did you know they gave you some asters? These are n't sweet peas."

"No — I know — but I thought — you see, sweet peas are over by August, and asters go on all through October — don't you remember what lovely ones Christabel had?"

"Hm! But is n't the world full of asters, anyway, in September and October, without your planting any more?" He grinned a little. "I thought that was your idea — you said Christabel grubbed so."

"Why, yes; but asters are n't any trouble. You just put them in —"

"And weed them."

"Yes — and weed them; but I would n't mind that."

"But here's some larkspur!"

"Yes, but I did n't buy that," I explained, hurriedly. "Christabel sent me that. She thought I might like some from her garden — she has such lovely larkspurs, don't you remember? And I just brought them along."

"Yes. So I see. Is that all you've just brought along?"

"Yes — except the cosmos. The florist advised that, and I thought there might be a place for it over by the fence. And of course we need n't use it if we don't want to. I can give it to Mrs. Stone."

"But here's some nasturtiums!"

"Oh — I forgot about them — but I did n't buy them either. They came from the Department of Agriculture or something. There were some carrots and parsnips, and things like that, too, all in a big brown envelope. I knew you had all the other things you wanted, so I just brought these. But of course I don't have to plant *them*, either."

"But you don't like nasturtiums. You've always said they made you think of railway stations and soldiers' homes —"

"Well, I did use to feel that way, — an-

chors and crosses and rock-work on big shaved lawns, — and, besides, nasturtiums always seemed to be the sort of flowers that people picked with short stems, and tied up in a wad, and stuck in a blue-glass goblet, and set on a table with a red cover on it. I did have horrible associations with nasturtiums.”

“Then why in thunder do you plant them?”

“I only thought — if there was a drought this summer — you know they don’t mind drought; Millie Sutphen told me that. And she had a way of cutting them with long stems, so they trailed, and they were really lovely. And then — there the package *was* — I thought it would n’t do any harm to take it.”

“Oh, you don’t have to apologize,” said Jonathan. “I did n’t understand your plan, that was all. I’ll go and see Henry about the trench.”

I sat on the sunny porch and the March wind swept by the house on each side of me. I gloated over my seed packets. Would they come up? Of course other people’s seeds came

up, but would mine? It was very exciting. I pinched open a corner of the Lady Grisel Hamiltons and poured some of the pretty, smooth, fawn-colored balls into my hand. Then I opened the cosmos — what funny long thin ones! How long should I have to wait till they began to come up? I read the directions — “Plant when all danger from frost is past.” Oh, dear! that meant May — another whole month! Well, I would get in my sweet peas and risk my pansies and alyssum, anyhow. And I jumped off the porch and went back to the phlox to plan out my campaign.

By early May we were settled on the farm once more. My pansies and alyssum were up — at least I believed they were up, but I spent many minutes of each day kneeling by them and studying the physiognomy of their cotyledons. I led Jonathan out to them one Sunday morning, and he regarded them with indulgence if not with enthusiasm. As he stooped to throw out a bunch of pebbles in one of the new beds I stopped him. “Oh, don’t! Those are my Mizpah stones.”

"Your what!"

"Why, just some little stones to mark a place. Some of the nasturtiums are there. I did n't know whether they were going to do anything — they looked so like chips — and then, being sent free that way — but they are."

"How do you know? They are n't up."

"No, but they will be soon. I — why, I just thought I'd see what they were doing."

"So you dug them up?" he probed.

"Not them — just *it* — just one. That's why I marked the place. I did n't want to keep disturbing different ones. Now what *are* you laughing at? Would n't you have wanted to know? And you would n't want to dig up different ones all the time! I don't know much about gardening, but —"

"I'm not laughing," said Jonathan. "Of course I should have wanted to know. And it is certainly better not to dig up different ones. There! Have I put your Mizpah back right?"

A few days later Jonathan wheeled into the yard and over near where I was kneeling

by the phlox. "I saw a lady-slipper bud almost out to-day," he said.

"Did you? Look at my sweet alyssum. It's grown an inch since yesterday," I said. "Don't you think I could plant my cosmos and asters now?"

"Thunder!" said Jonathan; "don't you care more about the pink lady-slipper than about your blooming little sweet alyssum?"

"Why, yes, of course. I *love* lady-slippers. You know I do," I protested; "only — you see — I can't explain exactly — but — it seems to make a difference when you plant a thing yourself. And, oh, Jonathan! Won't you *please* come here and tell me if these are young pansies or only plantain? I'm so afraid of pulling up the wrong thing. I do wish somebody would make a book with pictures of all the cotyledons of all the different plants. It's so confusing. Millie had an awful time telling marigold from ragweed last summer. She had to break off a tip of each leaf and taste it. Why do you just stand there looking like that? Please come and help."

But Jonathan did not move. He stood, leaning on his wheel, regarding me with open

amusement, and possibly a shade of disapproval.

"Lord!" he finally remarked; "you've got it!"

"Got what?" I said, though I knew.

"The garden germ."

Yes. There was no denying it. I had it. I have it still, and there is very little chance of my shaking it off. It is a disease that grows with what it feeds on. Now and then, indeed, I make a feeble fight against its inroads: I will *not* have another flower-bed, I will *not* have any more annuals, I will have only things that live on from year to year and take care of themselves. But —

"Alas, alas, repentance oft before
I swore — but was I sober when I swore?
And then — and then — came spring —"

and the florist's catalogues! And is any one who has once given way to them proof against the seductions of those catalogues? Those asters! Those larkspurs! Those foxgloves and poppies and Canterbury bells! All that ravishing company, mine at the price of a few cents and a little grubbing. Mine! There is

the secret of it. Out in the great and wonderful world beyond my garden, nature works her miracles constantly. She lays her riches at my feet; they are mine for the gathering. But to work these miracles myself, — to have my own little hoard that looks to me for tending, for very life, — that is a joy by itself. My little garden bed gives me something that all the luxuriance of woods and fields can never give — not better, not so good, perhaps, but different. Once having known the thrill of watching the first tiny shoot from a seed that I have planted myself, once having followed it to leaf and flower and seed again, I can never give it up.

My garden is not very big nor very beautiful. Perhaps the stretch of rocks and grass and weeds beside the house — an expanse which not even the wildest flight of the imagination could call a lawn — perhaps this might be more pleasing if the garden were not there, but it is there, and there it will stay. It means much grubbing. Just putting in seeds and then weeding is, I find, no mere affair of rhetoric. Moreover, I am introduced through my garden to an entirely new set of troubles:

beetles and¹ cutworms and moles and hens and a host of marauding creatures above ground and below, whose number and energy amaze me. And each summer seems to add to their variety and resourcefulness. Clearly, the pleasures of a garden are not commensurate with its pains. And yet —

But there is one kind of joy which it gives me at which even the Scoffer — to wit, Jonathan — does not scoff. It began with Aunt Deborah's phlox. Then came Christabel's larkspur. The next summer Mrs. Stone sent me over some of her hardy little fall asters — "artemishy," she called them. And Anne Stafford sent on some hollyhock seeds culled from Emerson's garden. And Great-Aunt Sarah was dividing her peony roots, and said I might take one. And Cousin Patty asked me if I would n't like some of her mother's old-fashioned pinks. And so it goes.

And so it will go, I hope, to the end of the long day. Each year my garden has in it more of my friends, and as I look at it I can adopt poor Ophelia's pretty speech in a new meaning, and say, "Larkspur—that's for remembrance; hollyhocks—that's for

thoughts." Remembrance of all those dear other gardens which I have come to know, and in whose beauties I am coming to have a share; thoughts of all those dear other gardeners upon whom, as upon me, the miracle of the seed has laid a spell from which they can never escape.

VI

The Farm Sunday

I HAVE never been able to discover why it is that things always happen Sunday morning. We mean to get to church. We speak of it almost every Sunday, unless there is a steady downpour that puts it quite out of the question. But, somehow, between nine and ten o'clock on a Sunday morning seems to be the farm's busiest time. If there are new broods of chickens, they appear then; if there is a young calf coming, it is his birthday; if the gray cat — an uninvited resident of the barn — must go forth on marauding expeditions, he chooses this day for his evil work, and the air is rent with shrieks of robins, or of cat-birds, or of phœbes, and there is a wrecked nest, and scattered young ones, half-fledged, that have to be gathered into a basket and hung up in the tree again by our united efforts. And always there is the same conversation:

"Well, what about church?"

"Church! It's half-past ten now."

"We can't do it. Too bad!"

"Now, if it had n't been for that cat!" —
or that hen — or that calf!

There are many Sunday morning stories that might be told, but one must be told.

It was a hot, still Sunday in July. The hens sought the shade early, and stood about with their beaks half open and a distant look in their eyes, as if they saw you but chose to look just beyond you. It always irritates me to see the hens do that. It makes me feel hotter. Such a day it was. But things on the farm seemed propitious, and we said at breakfast that we would go.

"I've just got to take that two-year-old Devon down to the lower pasture," said Jonathan, "and then I'll harness. We ought to start early, because it's too hot to drive Kit fast."

"Do you think you'd better take the cow down this morning?" I said, doubtfully. "Could n't you wait until we come back?"

"No; that upper pasture is getting burned out, and she ought to get into some good

grass this morning. I meant to take her down last night."

"Well, do hurry." I still felt dubious.

"Oh, it's only five minutes' walk down the road," said Jonathan easily. "I'm all ready for church, except for these shoes. I'll have the carriage at the door before you're dressed."

I said no more, but went upstairs, while Jonathan started for the barnyard. A few minutes later I heard from that direction the sounds of exhortation such as are usually employed towards "critters." They seemed to be coming nearer. I glanced out of a front window, and saw Jonathan and his cow coming up the road past the house.

"Where are you taking her?" I called. "I thought you meant to go the other way."

"So I did," he shouted, in some irritation. "But she swung up to the right as she went out of the gate, and I could n't head her off in time. Oh, there's Bill Russell. Head her round, will you, Bill? There, now we're all right."

"I'll be back in ten minutes," he called up at my window as he repassed.

I watched them go back up the road. At the big farm gate the cow made a break for the barnyard again, but the two men managed to turn her. Just beyond, at the fork in the road, I saw Bill turn down towards the cider-mill, while Jonathan kept on with his convoy over the hill. I glanced at the clock. It was not yet nine. There was plenty of time, of course.

At half-past nine I went downstairs again, and wandered out toward the big gate. It seemed to me time for Jonathan to be back. In the Sunday hush I thought I heard sounds of distant "hi-ing." They grew louder; yes, surely, there was the cow, just appearing over the hill and trotting briskly along the road towards home. And there was Jonathan, also trotting briskly. He looked red and warm. I stepped out into the road to keep the cow from going past, but there was no need. She swung cheerfully in at the big gate, and fell to cropping the long grass just inside the fence.

Jonathan slowed down beside me, and, pulling out his handkerchief, began flapping the dust off his trousers while he explained:—

"You see, I got her down there all right, but I had to let down the bars, and while I

was doing that she went along the road a bit, and when she saw me coming she just kicked up her heels and galloped."

"How did you stop her?" I asked.

"I did n't. The Maxwells were coming along with their team, and they headed her back for me. Then they went on. Only by that time, you see, she was a bit excited, and when we came along back to those bars she shot right past them, and never stopped till she got here."

I looked at her grazing quietly inside the fence. "She does n't look as though she had done so much," — and then, as I glanced at Jonathan, I could not forbear saying, — "but you do."

"I suppose I do." He gave his trousers a last flick, and, putting up his handkerchief, shifted his stick to his right hand.

"Well, put her back in the inner yard," I said, "and this afternoon I'll help you."

"Put her back!" said Jonathan. "Not much! You don't think I'd let a cow beat me that way!"

"But Jonathan, it's half-past nine!"

"What of it? I'll just work her slowly —

she's quiet now, you see, and the bars are open. There won't be any trouble."

"Oh, I wish you would n't," I said. But, seeing he was firm, "Well, if you *will* go, I'll harness."

Jonathan looked at me ruefully. "That's too bad — you're all dressed." He wavered, but I would take no concessions based on feminine equipment. "Oh, that does n't matter. I'll get my big apron. First you start her out, and I'll keep her from going towards the house or down to the mill."

Jonathan sidled cautiously through the gate and around the grazing cow. Then, with a gentle and ingratiating "Hi there, Bossie!" he managed to turn her, still grazing, towards the road. While the grass held out she drifted along easily enough, but when she reached the dirt of the roadway she raised her head, flicked her tail, and gave a little hop with her hind quarters that seemed to me indicative of an unquiet spirit. But I stood firm and Jonathan was gently urgent, and we managed to start her on the right road once more. She was not, however, going as slowly as Jonathan had planned, and it was with some misgivings that

I donned my apron and went in to harness Kit. I led her around to the carriage-house and put her into the buggy, and still he had not returned. I got out the lap robe, shook it, and folded it neatly on the back of the seat. No Jonathan! There was nothing more for me to do, so I took off my apron and climbed into the carriage to wait. The carriage-house was as cool a place as one could have found. Both its big sliding doors were pushed back, one opening out toward the front gate, the other, opposite, opening into the inner barnyard. I sat and looked out over the rolling, sunny country and felt the breeze, warm, but fresh and sweet, and listened to the barn swallows in the barnyard behind me, and wondered, as I have wondered a thousand times, why in New England the outbuildings always have so much better views than the house.

Ten o'clock! Where *was* Jonathan? The Morehouses drove past, then the Elkinses; they went to the Baptist. Ten minutes past! There went the O'Neils — they belonged to our church — and the Scrantons, and Billy Howard and his sister, driving fast as usual;

they were always late. Quarter-past ten! Well, we might as well give up church. I thought of unharnessing, but I was very comfortable where I was, and Kit seemed contented as she stood looking out of the door. Hark! What was that? It sounded like the beat of hoofs in the lane — the cattle would n't come up at this hour! I stood up to see past the inner barnyard and off down the lane. "What on earth!" I said to myself. For — yes — surely — that was the two-year-old Devon coming leisurely up the lane towards the yard. In a few moments Jonathan's head appeared, then his shoulders, then his entire dusty, discouraged self. Yes, somehow or other, they must have made the round trip. As this dawned upon me, I smiled, then I laughed, then I sat down and laughed again till I was weak and tearful. It was cruel, and by the time Jonathan had reached the carriage-house and sunk down on its threshold I had recovered enough to be sorry for him. But I was unfortunate in my first remark. "Why, Jonathan," I gasped, "what *have* you been doing with that cow?"

Jonathan mopped his forehead. "Having

iced tea under the trees. Could n't you see that to look at me?" he replied, almost savagely.

"You poor thing! I'll make you some when we go in. But do tell me, how did you *ever* get around here again from the back of the farm that way?"

"Easy enough," said Jonathan. "I drove her along to the pasture in great shape, only we were going a little fast. She tried to dodge the bars, but I turned her in through them all right. But some idiot had left the bars down at the other end of the pasture — between that and the back lots, you know — and that blamed cow went for that opening, just as straight —"

I began to shake again. "Oh, that brought you out by the huckleberry knoll, and the ledges! Why, she could go anywhere!"

"She could, and she did," said Jonathan grimly. He leaned back against the doorpost, immersed in bitter reminiscence. "She — certainly — did. I chased her up the ledges and through the sumachs and down through the birches and across the swamp. Oh, we did the farm, the whole blamed farm. What time is it?"

"Half-past ten," I said gently; and added, "What are you going to do with her now?"

His jaw set in a fashion I knew.

"I'm going to put her in that lower pasture."

I saw it was useless to protest. Church was a vanished dream, but I began to fear that Sunday dinner was also doomed. "Do you want me to help?" I asked.

"Oh, no," said Jonathan. "I'll put her in the barn till I can get a rope, and then I'll lead her."

However, I did help get her into the barn. Then while he went for his rope I unharnessed. When he came back, he had changed into a flannel shirt and working trousers. He entered the barn and in a few moments emerged, pulling hard on the rope. Nothing happened.

"Go around the other way," he called, "and take a stick, and poke that cow till she starts."

I went in at the back door, slid between the stanchions into the cow stall, and gingerly poked at the animal's hind quarters and said, "Hi!" until at last, with a hunching of hips

and tossing of head, she bounded out into the sunny barnyard.

"She'll be all right now," said Jonathan.

I watched them doubtfully, but they got through the bars and as far as the road without incident. At the road she suddenly balked. She twisted her horns and set her front legs. I hurried down from my post of observation in the carriage-house door, and said "Hi!" again.

"That's no good," panted Jonathan; "get your stick again. Now, when I pull, you hit her behind, and she'll come. I guess she has n't been taught to lead yet."

"If she has, she has apparently forgotten," I replied. "Now, then, you pull!"

The creature moved on grudgingly, with curious and unlovely sidewise lunges and much brandishing of horns, where the rope was tied.

"Hit her again, now!" said Jonathan. "Oh, *hit* her! Hit her harder! She does n't feel that. *Hit* her! There! Now, she's coming."

Truly, she did come. But I am ashamed to think how I used that stick. As we progressed up the road, over the hill, and down to the

lower pasture, there kept repeating themselves over and over in my head the lines: —

“The sergeant pushed and the corporal pulled,
And the three they wagged along.”

But I did not quote these to Jonathan until afterwards. There was something else, too, that I did not quote until afterwards. This was the remark of a sailor uncle of mine: “A man never tackled a job yet that he did n’t have to have a woman to hold on to the slack.”

So much for Sunday business. But it should not for a moment be supposed that Sunday is full of these incidents. It is only for a little while in the morning. After the church hour, about eleven o’clock or earlier, the farm settles down. The “critters” are all attended to, the chicks are stowed, the cat has disappeared, the hens have finished all their important business and are lying on their sides in their favorite dirt-holes enjoying their dust-baths, so still, yet so disheveled that I used to think they were dead, and poke them to see — with what cacklings and flutterings resulting may be imagined.

I have often wished for the hen's ability to express indignation.

Yes, the farm is at peace, and as we sit under the big maples it seems to be reproaching us — "See how quiet everything is! And you could n't even manage church!"

Other people seem to manage it very comfortably and quite regularly. On Sunday morning our quiet little road, unfrequented even by the ubiquitous automobile, is gay with church-goers. "Gay" may seem the wrong word, but it is quite the right one. In the city church-going is rather a sober affair. People either walk or take cars. They wear a certain sort of clothes, known as "church clothes," which represent a sort of hedging compromise between their morning and their afternoon wear. They approach the church in decorous silence; as they emerge they exchange subdued greetings, walk a block or two in little companies, then scatter to their homes and their Sunday dinners.

But in the country everybody but the village people drives, and the roads are full of teams, — buggies, surreys, phaetons, — the carriages newly washed, the horses freshly

groomed, the occupants scrupulously dressed in the prettiest things they own — their “Sunday-go-to-meeting” ones, which means something quite different from “church clothes.” As one nears the village there is some friendly rivalry between horses, there is the pleasure of “catching up” with neighbors’ teams, or of being caught up with, and at the church door there is the business of alighting and hitching the horses, and then, if it is early, waiting about outside for the “last bell” before going in.

Even in the church itself there is more freedom and variety than in our city tabernacles. In these there are always the same memorial windows to look at, — except perhaps once in ten years when somebody dies and a new one goes in, — but in the country stained glass is more rare. In many it has not even gained place at all, and the panes of clear glass let in a glory of blueness and whiteness and greenness to rejoice the heart of the worshiper. In others, more ambitious, alas! there is ground glass with tinted borders; but this is not very disturbing, especially when the sashes are set open aslant, and the ivy and

Virginia creeper cluster just outside, in bright greens and dark, or cast their shifting shadows on the glass, a dainty tracery of gray on silver.

And at the altar there are flowers — not florist flowers, contracted for by the year, but neighborhood flowers. There are Mrs. Cummings's peonies — she always has such beauties; and Mrs. Hiram Brown's roses — nobody else has any of just that shade of yellow; and Mary Lord's foxgloves and larkspur — what a wonder of yellow and white and blue! Each in its season, the flowers are full of personal significance. The choir, too, is made up of our friends. There is Hiram Brown, and Jennie Sewall, and young Mrs. Harris, back for three weeks to visit her mother, and little Sally Winter, a shy new recruit, very pink over her promotion. The singing is perhaps not as finished as that of a paid quartette, but it is full of life and sweetness, and it makes a direct human appeal that the other often misses.

After the service people go out slowly, waiting for this friend and that, and in the vestibule and on the steps and in the churchyard they gather in groups. The men saunter

off to the sheds to get the horses, and the women chat while they wait. Then the teams come up, as many as the roadway will hold, and there is the bustle of departure, the taking of seats, the harsh grinding of wheels against the wagon body as the driver "cramps" to turn round, then good-byes, and one after another the teams start off, out into the open country for another week of quiet, busy farm life.

Yes, church is distinctively a social affair, and very delightful, and when our cows and hens and calves and other "critters" do not prevent, we are glad to have our part in it all. When they do, we yet feel that we have a share in it simply through seeing "the folks" go by. It is a distinct pleasure to see our neighbors trundling along towards the village. And then, if luck has been against us and we cannot join them, it is a pleasure to lie in the grass and listen to the quiet. After the last church-goers have passed, the road is deserted for two hours, until they begin to return. The neighboring farms are quiet, the "folks" are away, or, if some of the men are at home, they are sitting on their doorsteps smoking.

If there is no wind, or if it is in the right quarter, we can hear the church bells, faintly now, and now very clear; there is the First Church bell, and the Baptist; there is St. John's, on a higher note, and Trinity, a little lower. After a time even the bells cease, and there is no sound but the wind in the big maples and the bees as they drone among the flower heads.

Sunday, at least Sunday on a Connecticut farm, has a distinct quality of its own. I can hardly say what it means to me — no one, I suppose, could say all that it means. To call it a day of rest does not individualize it enough. It has to be described not so much in terms of rest as of balance and height. I think of the week as a long, sweeping curve, like the curve of a swift, deep wave at sea, and Sunday is the crest, the moment of poise, before one is drawn down into the next great concave, then up again, to pause and look off, and it is Sunday once more.

The weather does not matter. If it rains, you get one kind of pause and outlook — the intimate, indoor kind. If the sun shines, you get another kind — wide and bright. And

what you do does not matter so long as it is different from the week, and so long as it expresses and develops that peculiar Sunday quality of balance and height. I can imagine nothing drearier than seven days all alike, and seven more, and seven more! Sundays are the big beads on the chain. They need not be all of the same color, but there must be the big beads to satisfy the eye and the finger-tip.

And a New England Sunday always is different. Whatever changes may have come or may be coming elsewhere, in New England Sunday has its own atmosphere. Over the fields and woods and rocks there is a sense of poise between reminiscence and expectancy. The stir of the morning church-going brightens but does not mar this. It adds the human note — rather not a note, but a quiet chord of many tones. And after it comes a hush. The early afternoon of a New England Sunday is the most absolutely quiet thing imaginable. It is the precise middle of the wave crest, the moment when motion ceases.

From that point time begins to stir again. Life resumes. There is a certain amount of desultory intercourse between farm and farm.

If people are engaged, or mean to be, they drive out together; if they are married, they go home to "his folks" or "her folks." Friends walk together, farmers saunter along the road or back on the farms to "take a look" at things. Consciously or not, and usually not, there is a kind of synthesis taking place, a gathering together of the scattered threads of many interests, a vague sense of the wholeness of life.

At five o'clock the cows turn towards home, and graze their leisurely way along the barnyard lanes. And with the cows come duties,—chore-time,—then the simple, cold supper, then the short, quiet evening, and off we swing into the night that sweeps us away from the crest down into the long, blind hollow of the week.

VII

The Grooming of the Farm

THERE is a story about an artist who espied a picturesque old man and wished to paint him. At the time appointed the model arrived — new-shaven, new-washed, freshly attired, with all the delicious and incommunicable flavor of the years irretrievably lost! Doubtless there are many such stories; doubtless the thing has happened many, many times. And I am sorrier for the artist now than I used to be, because it is happening to me.

Only it is not an old man — it is the farm, the blessed old farm, unkempt, unshorn, out at the elbows. In spite of itself, in spite of me, in spite of everybody, the farm is being groomed.

It is nobody's fault, of course. Like most hopelessly disastrous things, it has all been done with the best possible intentions, perhaps it has even been necessary, but it is none the less deplorable.

It began, I think, with the sheds. They had in ages past been added one after another by a method of almost unconscious accretion, as the chambered nautilus makes his shell. They looked as if they had been, not exactly built, but rather laid together in the desultory, provisional fashion of the farmer, and held by an occasional nail, or the natural adhesion of the boards themselves. They leaned confidently against the great barn and settled comfortably among the bare faces of rock in the barnyard, as if they had always been there, as, indeed, they had been there longer than any one now living can remember. Neither they nor the barn had ever been painted, and they had all weathered to a silver-gray — not the gray of any paint or stain ever made, but the gray that comes only to certain kinds of wood when it has lived out in the rain and the sunshine for fifty, seventy, a hundred years. It is to an old building what white hair is to an old lady. And as not all white hair is beautiful, so not all gray buildings are beautiful. But these were beautiful. When it rained, they grew dark and every knot-hole showed. When the sun came out and baked them dry, they

paled to silver, and the smooth, rain-worn grooves and hollows of the boards glistened like a rifle barrel.

The sheds were, I am afraid, not very useful. One, they said, had been built to hold ploughs, another for turkeys, another for ducks. One, the only one that was hen-tight, we used for the incarceration of confirmed "setters," and it thus gained the title of "Durance Vile." The rest were nameless, the abode of cobwebs and rats and old grain-bags and stolen nests and surprise broods of chickens, who dropped through cracks between loose boards and had to be extracted by Jonathan with much difficulty. Perhaps it was this that set him against them. At all events, he decided that they must go. I protested faintly, trying to think of some really sensible argument.

"But Durance Vile," I said. "We need that. Where shall we put the setters?"

"No, we don't. That is n't the way to treat setters, anyway. They should be cooped and fed on meat."

"I suppose you read that in one of those agricultural experiment station pamphlets," I said.

Many things that I consider disasters on the farm can be traced to one or another of these little pamphlets, and when a new one arrives I regard it with resignation but without cordiality.

The sheds went, and I missed them. Possibly the hens missed them too. They wandered thoughtfully about the barnyard, stepping rather higher than usual, cocking their heads and regarding me with their red-rimmed eyes as if they were cluckfully conjuring up old associations. Did they remember Durance Vile? Perhaps, but probably not. For all their philosophic airs and their attitudinizing, I know nobody who thinks less than a hen, or, at all events, their thinking is contemplative rather than practical.

Jonathan also surveyed the raw spot. But Jonathan's mind is practical rather than contemplative.

"Just the place for a carriage-house," he remarked.

And the carriage-house was perpetrated. Perhaps a hundred years from now it will have been assimilated, but at present it stands out absolutely undigested in all its

uncompromising newness of line and color. Its ridgepole, its roof edges, its corners, look as if they had been drawn with a ruler, where those of the old barn were sketched freehand. The barn and the sheds had settled into the landscape, the carriage-house cut into it.

Even Jonathan saw it. "We'll paint it the old-fashioned red to make it more in keeping," he said apologetically.

But old-fashioned red is apparently not to be had in new-fashioned cans. And the farm remained implacable: it refused to digest the carriage-house. I felt rather proud of the farm for being so firm.

The next blow was a heavy one. In the middle of the cowyard there was a wonderful gray rock, shoulder high, with a flat top and three sides abrupt, the other sloping. I used to sit on this rock and feed the hens and watch the "critters" come into the yard at milking-time. I like "critters," but when there are more than two or three in the yard, including some irresponsible calves, I like to have some vantage-point from which to view them — and be viewed. Our cattle are always gentle, but some of them are, to use a colloquial word

that seems to me richly descriptive, so "nose-y."

Of course a rock like this did not belong in a well-planned barnyard. Nowhere, except in New England, or perhaps in Switzerland, would one occur. But in our part of New England they occur so thickly that they are hard to dodge, even in building a house. I remember an entry in an old ledger discovered in the attic: "To blasten rocks in my sollor — £0 3 6."

Without doubt the rock was in the way. Jonathan used to speak about it in ungente terms every time he drove in and turned around. But this gave me no anxiety, because I felt sure that it had survived much stronger language than his. I did not think about dynamite. Probably when the Psalmist wrote about the eternal hills he did not think about dynamite either.

And dynamite did the deed. It broke my pretty rock into little pieces as one might break up a chunk of maple sugar with a pair of scissors. It made a beautiful barnyard, but I missed my refuge, my stronghold.

But this was only the beginning. Back of

the barns lay the farm itself — scores of acres, chiefly rocks and huckleberry bushes, with thistles and mullein and sumac. There were dry, warm slopes, where the birches grew; not the queenly paper birch of the North, but the girlish little gray birch with its veil of twinkling leaves and its glimmer of slender stems. There were rugged ledges, deep-shadowed with oak and chestnut; there were hot, open hillsides thick-set with cat-brier and blackberry canes, where one could never go without setting a brown rabbit scampering. It was a delectable farm, but not, in the ordinary sense, highly productive, and its appeal was rather to the contemplative than to the practical mind.

Jonathan was from the first infected with the desire of making the farm more productive — in the ordinary sense; and one day, when I wandered up to a distant corner, oh, dismay! There was a slope of twinkling birches — no longer twinkling — prone! Cut, dragged, and piled up in masses of white stems and limp green leafage and tangled red-brown twigs! It was a sorry sight. I walked about it much, perhaps, as my white hens had walked

about the barnyard, and to as little purpose. For the contemplative mind is no match for the practical. I knew this, yet I could not forbear saying, later: —

“Jonathan, I was up near the long meadow to-day.”

“Were you?”

“O Jonathan! Those birches!”

“What about them?”

“All cut!”

“Oh, yes. We need that piece for pasture.”

“Oh, dear! We might as well not have a farm if we cut down all the birches.”

“We might as well not have a farm if we don’t cut them down. They’ll run us out in no time.”

“They don’t look as if they would run anybody out — the dears!”

“Why, I did n’t know you felt that way about them. We’ll let that other patch stand, if you like.”

“*If I like!*”

I saved the birches, but other things kept happening. I went out one day and found one of our prettiest fence lines reduced to bare

bones, all its bushes and vines — clematis, elderberry, wild cherry, sweet-fern, bitter-sweet — all cut, hacked, torn away. It looked like a collie dog in the summer when his long yellow fur has been sheared off. And, another day, it was a company of red lilies escaped along a bank above the roadside. There were weeds mixed in, to be sure, and some bushes, a delightful tangle — and all snipped, shaved to the skin!

When I spoke about it, Jonathan said: "I'm sorry. I suppose Hiram was just making the place shipshape."

"Shipshape! This farm shipshape! You could no more make this farm shipshape than you could make a woodchuck look as though he had been groomed. The farm is n't a ship."

"I hope it is n't a woodchuck, either," said Jonathan.

During the haying season there was always a lull. The hand of the destroyer was stayed. Rather, every one was so busy cutting the hay that there was no time to cut anything else. One day in early August I took a pail and sauntered up the lane in the peaceful mood of the berry-picker — a state of mind as satis-

factory as any I know. One is conscious of being useful — for what more useful than the accumulating of berries for pies? One has suitable ideals — the ideal of a happy home, since in attaining a happy home berry pies are demonstrably helpful. And one is also having a beautiful time. On my way I turned down the side lane to see how the blackberries were coming on. There lay my blackberry canes — lay, not stood — their long stems thick-set with fruit just turning from light red to dark. I do not love blackberries as I do birches; it was rather the practical than the contemplative part of me that protested that time, but it was with a lagging step that I went on, over the hill, to the berry patches. There another shock awaited me. Where I expected to see green clumps of low huckleberries there were great blotches of black earth and gray ashy stems, and in the midst a heap of brush still sending up idle streamers and puffs of blue smoke. Desolation of desolations! That they should do this thing to a harmless berry patch!

They were not all burned. Only the heart of the patch had been taken, and after the

first shock I explored the edges to see what was left, but with no courage for picking. I came home with an empty pail and a mind severe.

"Jonathan," I said that night, "I thought you liked pies?"

"I do," he said expectantly.

"Well, what do you like in them?"

"Berries, preferably."

"Oh, I thought perhaps you preferred cinders or dried briers."

Jonathan looked up inquiringly, then a light broke. "Oh, you mean those blackberry bushes. Did n't I tell you about that? That was a mistake."

"So I thought," I said, unappeased.

"I mean, I did n't mean them to be cut. It was that fool hobo I gave work to last week. I told him to cut the brush in the lane. Idiot! I thought he knew a blackberry bush!"

"With the fruit on it, too," I added, relenting toward Jonathan a little. Then I stiffened again. "How about the huckleberry patch? Was that a mistake, too?"

Jonathan looked guilty, but held himself as a man should.

"Why, no," he said; "that is, Hiram thought we needed more ground to plough up next year, and that's as good a piece as there is — no big rocks or trees, you know. And we must have crops, you know."

"Bless the rocks!" I burst out. "I wish there were more of them! If it were n't for the rocks the farm would be *all* crops!"

Jonathan laughed, then we both laughed.

"You talk as though that would be a misfortune," he said.

"It would be simply unendurable," I replied.

"Jonathan," I added, "I am afraid you have not a proper subordination of values. I have heard of one farmer — just one — who had."

"What is it? — and who was he?" said Jonathan, submissively.

I think he was relieved that the huckleberry question was not being followed up.

"I believe he was your great-uncle by marriage. They say that there was a certain field that was full of butterfly-weed — you know, gorgeous orange stuff —"

"I know," said he. "What about it?"

"Well, there was a meadow that was full of it, just in its glory when the grass was ready to cut. Jonathan, what would you have done?"

"Go on," said Jonathan.

"Well, he always mowed that field himself, and when he came to a clump of butterfly-weed, he always *mowed around it*."

"Very pretty," said Jonathan, in an impersonal way.

"And that," I added, "is what I call having a proper subordination of values."

"I see," said he.

"And now," I went on, with almost too ostentatious sweetness, "if you will tell me where to find a huckleberry patch that is not already reduced to cinders, I will go out tomorrow and get some for pies."

Jonathan knew, and so did I, that there were still plenty of berry bushes left. Nevertheless, he was moved.

"Now, see here," he began seriously, "I don't want to spoil the farm for you. Only I don't know which things you like. If you'll just tell me the places you don't want touched, I'll speak to Hiram about them."

"Really?" I exclaimed. "Why, I'll tell

you now, right away. There's the lane — you know, that must n't be touched; and the ledges — but you could n't do anything to those, of course, anyway."

"No, even the hobo would n't tackle them," said Jonathan grimly.

"And the birches, the ones that are left. You promised me those, you know. And the swamp, of course, and the cedar knoll where the high-bush blueberries grow, and then — oh, yes — that lovely hillside beyond the long meadow where the sumac is, and the dogwood, and everything. And, of course, the rest of the huckleberries —"

"The rest of the huckleberries!" said he. "That means all the farm. There is n't a spot as big as your hat where you can't show me some sort of a huckleberry bush."

"So much the better," I said contentedly.

"Oh, come now," he protested. "Be reasonable. Even your wonderful farmer that you tell about did a little mowing. He mowed around the butterfly-weed, but he mowed. You're making the farm into solid butterfly-weed, and there'll be no mowing at all."

"Why, Jonathan, I've left you the long

meadow, and the corner meadow, and the hill orchard, and then there's the ten-acre lot for corn and potatoes — only I wish you would n't plant potatoes."

"What's the matter with potatoes?"

"Oh, I don't know. First, they are too neat and green, and then they are all covered with potato-bug powder, and then they wither up and lie all around, and then they are dug, and the field is a sight! Now, rye and corn! They're lovely from beginning to end."

Jonathan ruminated. "I seem to see myself expressing these ideas to Hiram," he remarked dryly.

"I suppose it all comes down to the simple question, What is the farm for?" I said.

"I am afraid that is what Hiram would think," said Jonathan.

"Never mind about Hiram," I said severely. "Now really, away down deep, have n't you yourself a sneaking desire for — oh, for crops, and for having things look ship-shape, as you call it? Now, have n't you?"

"I wonder," said Jonathan, as though we were talking about a third person.

"I don't wonder; I know. The trouble with

men," I went on, "is that when they want to make a thing look well, all they can think of is cutting and chopping. Look at a man when he goes to a party, or to have his picture taken! He always dashes to the barber's first — that is, unless there's a woman around to interfere. Do you remember Jack Mason when he was married? Face and neck the color of raw beef from sunburn, and hair cropped so close it made his head look like a drab egg!"

"I did n't notice," said Jonathan.

"No, I suppose not. You would have done the same thing — you're all alike. Look at horses! When men want to make a horse look stylish, why, chop off his tail, of course! And they are only beginning to learn better. When a man builds a house, what does he do? Cuts down every tree, every bush and twig, and makes it 'shipshape,' as you call it. And then the women have to come along and plant everything all over again."

"But things need cutting now and then," said Jonathan. "You would n't like it, you know, if a man never went to the barber's. He'd look like a woodchuck."

"There are worse-looking things than woodchucks. Still, of course, there's a medium. Possibly the woodchuck carries neglect to excess."

The discussion rested there. I do not know whether Jonathan expressed any of these ideas to Hiram, but the grooming process appeared to be temporarily suspended. Then one day my turn came. It was dusk, and I was sitting on an old log at the back of the orchard, looking out over the little swamp, all a-twinkle with fireflies. Jonathan had been up the lane, prowling about, as he often does at nightfall, "to take a look at the farm." I heard his step in the lane, and he jumped over the bars at the far end of the orchard. There was a pause, then a vehement exclamation — too vehement to print. Jonathan's remarks do not usually need editing, and I listened to these in the dusk in some degree of wonder, if not of positive enjoyment.

Finally I called out, "What's the matter?"

"Oh! You there?" He strode over. "Matter! Come and see what that fool hobo did."

"You called him something besides that a moment ago," I remarked.

"I hope so. Whatever I called him, he's it. Come over."

He led me to the orchard edge, and there in the half light I saw a line of stubs and a pile of brush.

"Not your quince bushes!" I gasped.

"Just that," he said, grimly, and then burst into further unprintable phrases descriptive of the city-bred loafer. "If I ever give work to a hobo again, I'll be —"

"Sh-h-h," I said; and I could not forbear adding, "Now you know how I have felt about those huckleberry bushes and birches and things, only I had n't the language to express it."

"You have language enough," said Jonathan.

Undoubtedly Jonathan was depressed. I had been depressed for some time on account of the grooming of my berry patches and fence lines, but now I found myself growing suddenly cheerful. I do not habitually batten on the sorrow of others, but this was a special case. For how could I be blind to the fact that chance had thrust a weapon into my hand? I knew that hereafter, at critical mo-

ments, I need only murmur "quince bushes" and discussion would die out. It made me feel very gentle towards Jonathan, to be thus armed against him. Gentle, but also cheerful.

"Jonathan," I said, "it's no use standing here. Come back to the log where I was sitting."

He came, with heavy tread. We sat down, and looked out over the twinkling swamp. The hay had just been cut, and the air was richly fragrant. The hush of night encompassed us, yet the darkness was full of life. Crickets chirruped steadily in the orchard behind us. From a distant meadow the purring whistle of the whip-poor-will sounded in continuous cadence, like a monotonous and gentle lullaby. The woods beyond the open swamp, a shadowy blur against the sky, were still, except for a sleepy note now and then from some bird half-awakened. Once a wood thrush sang his daytime song all through, and murmured part of it a second time, then sank into silence.

"Jonathan," I said at last, "the farm is rather a good place to be."

"Not bad."

“Let’s not groom it too much. Let’s not make it too shipshape. After all, you know, it is n’t really a ship.”

“Nor yet a woodchuck, I hope,” said Jonathan.

And I was content not to press the matter.

VIII

“Escaped from Old Gardens”

IN the days when I deemed it necessary to hunt down in my well-thumbed Gray every flower of wood and field, and fit it to its Latin name, I used often to meet this phrase. At first, being young, I resented it. I scorned gardens: their carefully planned and duly tended splendors were not for me. The orchid in the deep woods or by the edge of the lonely swamp, the rare and long-sought heather in the open moorland, these it was that roused my ardor. And to find that some newly discovered flower was not a wild flower at all, but merely a garden flower “escaped”! The very word carried a hint of reprobation.

But as the years went on, the phrase gathered to itself meanings vague and subtle. I found myself welcoming it and regarding with a warmer interest the flower so described. From what old garden had it come? What associations and memories did it bring out

of the past? Had the paths where it grew been obliterated by the encroachments of a ruthless civilization, or had the tide of human life drawn away from it and left it to be engulfed by the forest from which it had once been wrested, with nothing left to mark it but a gnarled old lilac tree? I have chanced upon such spots in the heart of the wood, where the lilac and the apple tree and the old stoned cellar wall are all that are left to testify to the human life that once centred there. Or had the garden from which its seed was blown only fallen into a quiet decay, deserted but not destroyed, left to bloom unchecked and untended, and fling its seeds to the summer winds that its flowers might "escape" whither they would?

Lately, I chanced upon such a garden. I was walking along a quiet roadside, almost dusky beneath the shade of close-set giant maples, when an unexpected fragrance breathed upon me. I lingered, wondering. It came again, in a warm wave of the August breeze. I looked up at the tangled bank beside me — surely, there was a spray of box peeping out through the tall weeds! There was a

bush of it — another! Ah! it was a hedge, a box hedge! Here were the great stone steps leading up to the gate, and here the old, square capped fence-posts, once trim and white, now sunken and silver-gray. The rest of the fence was lying among the grasses and goldenrod, but the box still lived, dead at the top, its leafless branches matted into a hoary gray tangle, but springing up from below in crisp green sprays, lustrous and fragrant as ever, and richly suggestive of the past that produced it. For the box implies not merely human life, but human life on a certain scale: leisurely, decorous, well-considered. It implies faith in an established order and an assured future. A beautiful box hedge is not planned for immediate enjoyment; it is built up inch by inch through the years, a legacy to one's heirs.

Beside the gate-posts stood what must once have been two pillars of box. As I passed between them my feet felt beneath the matted weeds of many seasons the broad stones of the old flagged walk that led up through the garden to the house. Following it, I found, not the house, but the wide stone blocks of the old doorsteps, and beyond these, a ruin — gray

ashes and blackened brick, two great heaps of stone where the chimneys had been, with the stone slabs that lined the fireplaces fallen together. At one end was the deep stone cellar filled now with young beeches as tall as the house once was. Just outside stood two cherry trees close to the old house wall — so close that they had burned with it and now stood, black and bare and gaunt, in silent comradeship. At the other end I almost stumbled into the old well, dark and still, with a glimmer of sky at the bottom.

But I did not like the ruin, nor the black well lurking in the weeds and ashes. The garden was better, and I went back to it and followed the stone path as it turned past the end of the house and led, under another broad hedge of box now choked by lusty young maples, to the old rose-garden. Beyond were giant lilacs, and groups of waxberry bushes covered with the pretty white balls that children love to string; there was the old-fashioned "burning-bush," already preparing its queer, angled berries for autumn splendors. And among these, still holding their own in the tangle, clumps of the tall, rose-lilac phloxes

that the old people seem specially to have loved, swayed in the light breeze and filled the place with their heavy, languorous fragrance.

Truly, it is a lovely spot, my old garden, lovelier, perhaps, than when it was in its golden prime, when its hedges were faultlessly trimmed and its walks were edged with neat flower borders, when their smooth flagging-stones showed never a weed, and even the little heaps of earth piled up, grain by grain, by the industrious ants, were swept away each morning by the industrious broom. Then human life centred here; now it is very far away. All the sounds of the outside world come faintly to this place and take on its quality of quiet, — the lowing of cows in the pastures, the shouts of men in the fields, the deep, vibrant note of the railroad train which goes singing across distances where its rattle and roar fail to penetrate. It is very still here. Even the birds are quieter, and the crickets and the katydids less boisterous. The red squirrels move warily through the tree-tops with almost a chastened air, the black-and-gold butterflies flutter indolently about the

heads of the phlox, a hummingbird, flashing green, hovers about some belated blossom-heads of the scarlet bee-balm, and then, as if to point the stillness, alights on an apple twig, looking, when at rest, so very small! Only the cicada, as he rustles clumsily about with his paper wings against the flaking bark and yellowing leaves of an old apple tree, seems unmindful of the spell of silence that holds the place.

And the garden is mine now — mine because I have found it, and every one else, as I like to believe, has forgotten it. Next it is a grove of big old trees. Would they not have been cut down years ago if any one had remembered them? And on the other side is a meadow whose thick grass, waist-high, ought to have been mowed last June and gathered into some dusky, fragrant barn. But it is forgotten, like the garden, and will go leisurely to seed out there in the sun; the autumn winds will sweep it and the winter snow will mat down its dried tangle.

Forgotten — and as I lie in the long grass, drowsy with the scent of the hedge and the phlox, I seem only a memory myself. If I

stay too long I shall forget to go away, and no one will remember to find me. In truth, I feel not unwilling that it should be so. Could there be a better place? “Escaped from old gardens”! Ah, foolish, foolish flowers! If I had the happiness to be born in an old garden, I would not escape. I would stay there, and dream there, forever!

IX

The Country Road

ON a June day, years ago, I was walking along our country road. At the top of a steep little hill I paused to rest and let my eyes luxuriate in the billowing greens and tender blues of the valley below. While I stood there my neighbor came slowly up from the garden, her apron over her head, a basket of green peas on her arm.

"What a view you have up here on your hill!" I said.

She drew back her apron and turned to look off. "Yes," she said indulgently; "ye-e-s." Then her face brightened and she turned to me with real animation: "But it's better in winter when the leaves is off, 'n' you c'n see the passin' on the lower road."

Fresh from the city as I was, with all its prejudices and intolerance upon me, I was partly amused, partly irritated, by her answer. So all this glory of greenness, all this wonder of

the June woodland, was merely tolerated, while the baffled observer waited for the leaves to be "off"! And all for the sake of seeing — what? A few lumber wagons, forsooth, loaded with ties for the railway, a few cows driven along morning and evening, a few children trudging to and from school, the postman's buggy on its daily rounds, twice a week the meat cart, once a week the grocery wagon, once a month the "tea-man," and now and then a neighbor's team on its way to the feed-store or the blacksmith's shop down at "the Corners."

For this, then, — not for the beauty of the winter landscape, but for this poor procession of wayfarers, my neighbors waited with impatience. If I could, I would have snatched up their view bodily and carried it off with me, back to my own farm for my own particular delectation. It should never again have shoved itself in their way.

But since that time I have lived longer in the country. If I have not made it my home for all twelve months, I have dwelt in it from early April to mid-December, and now, when I think of my neighbor's remark, it is with grow-

ing comprehension. I realize that I, in my patronizing one-sidedness, was quite wrong.

City folk go to the country, as they say, to "get away" — justifiable enough, perhaps, or perhaps not. They seek spots remote from the centres; they choose deserted districts, untraveled roads; they criticize their ancestors unmercifully for their custom of building houses close to the road and keeping the front dooryard clear of shrubbery. But they who built those homes which are our summer refuge did not want to get away; they wanted to get together. The country was not their respite, it was their life, and the road was to them the emblem of race solidarity — nay, more than the emblem, it was the means to it. This is still the case with the country people, and as I live among them I am coming to a realization of the meaning of the Road.

In the city one can never get just this. There are streets, of course, but by their very multiplicity and complexity they lose their individual impressiveness and are merged in that great whole, the City. One recoils from them and takes refuge in the sense of one's own home.

But in the country there is just the Road. Recoil from it? One's heart goes out to it. The road is a part of home, the part that reaches out to our friends and draws them to us or brings us to them. It is our outdoor clubhouse, it is the avenue of the Expected and the Unexpected, it is the Home Road.

In a sense it does no more for us, and in some ways much less, than our city streets do. Along these, too, our tradesmen's carts come to our doors, along these our friends must fare as they arrive or depart; we seek the streets at our outgoings and our incomings. But they are, after all, strictly a means. We use them, but when we enter our homes we forget them, or try to. Our individual share in the street is not large. So much goes on and goes by that has only the most general bearing on our interests that we cease to give it our attention at all. It is not good form to watch the street, because it is not worth while. When children's voices fly in at our windows, we assume that they are other people's children, and they usually are. When we hear teams, we expect them to go by, and they usually do. When we hear a cab door slam, we take it for granted

that it is before some other house, and usually it is. And if, having nothing better to do, we perchance walk to the window and glance out between the curtains, we are repaid by seeing nothing interesting and by feeling a little shamefaced besides.

Not so in the country. What happens along the Road is usually our intimate concern. Most of those who go by on it are our own acquaintances and neighbors, and are interesting as such. The rest are strangers, and interesting as *such*. For it is the rarity of the stranger that gives him his piquancy.

And so in the country it is both good form and worth while to watch the Road—to “keep an eye out,” as they say. When Jonathan and I first came to the farm, we were incased in a hard incrustation of city ways. When teams passed, we did not look up; when a wagon rattled, we did not know whose it was, and we said we did not care. When one of our neighbors remarked, casually, “Heard Bill Smith’s team go by at half-past eleven last night. Wonder if the’s anythin’ wrong down his way,” we stared at one another in amazement, and wondered, “Now, how in the

world did he know it was Bill Smith's team?" We smiled over the story of a postmistress who had the ill luck to be selling stamps when a carriage passed. She hastily shoved them out, and ran to the side window — too late! "Sakes!" she sighed; "that's the second I've missed to-day!" We smiled, but I know now that if I had been in that postmistress's place I should have felt exactly as she did.

When we began to realize the change in ourselves, we were at first rather sheepish and apologetic about it. We fell into the way of sitting where we could naturally glance out of the windows, but we did this casually, as if by chance, and said nothing about it. When August came, and dusk fell early and lamps were lighted at supper-time, I drew down the shades.

But one night Jonathan said, carelessly, "Why do you pull them all the way down?"

"Why not?" I asked, with perhaps just a suspicion.

"Oh," he said, "it always seems so cheerful from the road to look in at a lighted window."

I left them up, but I noticed that Jonathan

kept a careful eye on the shadowy road outside. Was he trying to cheer it by pleasant looks, I wondered, or was he just trying to see all that went by?

Jonathan's seat is not so good as mine for observation. A big deutzia bush looms between his window and the road, while at my window only the tips of a waxberry bush obscure the view, and there is a door beside me. Therefore Jonathan was distinctly at a disadvantage. He offered to change seats, suggesting that there was a draft where I was, and that the light was bad for my eyes, but I found that I did not mind either of these things.

One day a team passed while Jonathan was carving. He looked up too late, hesitated, then said, rather consciously: "Who was that? Did you see?"

"*I don't know,*" I said, with a far-away, impersonal air, as though the matter had no interest for me. But I had n't the heart to keep up the pose, and I added: "Perhaps you'll know. It was a white horse, and a business wagon with red wheels, and the man wore a soft felt hat, and there was a dog on the seat beside him."

Before I had finished, Jonathan was grinning delightedly. "Suppose we shake these city ways," he said. He deliberately got up, raised the shades, pushed back a curtain, and moved a jug of goldenrod. "There! Can you see better now?" he asked.

And I said cheerfully, "Yes, quite a good deal better. And after this, Jonathan, when you hear a team coming, why don't you stop carving till it goes by?"

"I will," said Jonathan.

It was our final capitulation, and since then we have been much more comfortable. We run to the window whenever we feel inclined, and we leave our shades up at dusk without apology or circumlocution. We are coming to know our neighbors' teams by their sound, and we are proud of it. Why, indeed, should we be ashamed of this human interest? Why should we be elated that we can recognize a bluebird by his flight, and ashamed of knowing our neighbor's old bay by his gait? Why should we boast of our power to recognize the least murmur of the deceptive grosbeak, and not take pride in being able to "spot" Bill Smith's team by the

peculiar rattle of its board bottom as it crosses the bridge by the mill? Is he not of more value than many grosbeaks? But how can we love our neighbor if we do not pay some attention to him — him and his horse and his cart and all that is his? And how shall we pay attention to him if we neglect the opportunities of the Road, since for the rest he is busy and we are busy, and we belong each to our own farm?

I stopped at a friendly door one day to ask, "Have Phil and Jimmy gone by? I wanted to see them."

"No, I have n't seen them." The bright-faced little lady stood in the doorway glancing over my shoulder out toward the sunny road. "Have you seem them to-day, Nellie?" she called into the dusky sitting-room. "No," she turned back to me, "we have n't seen them. And," she added, with gay directness, "nobody could get by the house *without* our seeing them; I'm sure of that!"

Her remark pleased me immensely. I like this frank interest in the Road very much. When I am at home, I have it myself, and I have stopped being ashamed of it. When I

am on the Road, I like to know that I am an object of interest to the dwellers in the houses I pass. I look up at the windows, whose tiny panes reflect the brightness of outdoors and tell me nothing of the life within, and I like to think that some one behind them knows that I am going by. Often there is some sign of recognition — a motion of the hand through a parted curtain, or rarely a smiling face; now and then some one looks out from a doorway to send a greeting, or glances up from the garden or the well; but even without these tokens I still have the sense of being noticed, and I find it pleasant and companionable. In the city, when I go to see a friend, I approach a house that gives no sign. I mount to a non-committal vestibule and push an impersonal button, and after the other necessary preliminaries I find my friends. In the country as I drive up to the house I notice curtains stirring, I hear voices, and before I have had time to get out and find the hitch-rope every person in the house is either at the gate or standing in the doorway. Our visit is begun before we have left the Road, the hospitable, social Road. Such ways would probably not

do for the city. So much the worse for the city. The country ways are best.

Everything that happens along the Road has the social touch. In the city, orders are given by telephone, and when the delivery wagon comes, it sweeps up with a rush, the boy seizes a basket and jumps out, runs to the back door, shouts the name of the owner, slams down his goods, and dashes back to the wagon, with a crisp "Git-up!" to the well-trained horse, who starts forward while his driver is still mounting to his seat.

Not so in the country. The wagon draws peacefully out to the side of the Road, and the horse falls to nibbling grass if he is unchecked, or to browsing on my rosebushes if he is not. If it is the grocer's wagon, the boy comes around to the back porch and we discuss what supplies will probably be needed by the time of his next visit. Incidentally, we talk about weather and crops and woodchucks and trout, or bass or partridges, according to the season. If it is the meat cart or the fish wagon, I seize a platter and go out, the back flap of the cart is lifted up, I step under its shade and peer in, considering what is offered

me and deciding what I will have plucked out for me to carry back to the house.

Besides the routine visitors, there are others — peddlers with wonderful collections of things to sell (whole clothing shops or furniture stores some of them bring with them), peddlers with books, peddlers with silver, peddlers with jewelry. In the course of a few months one is offered everything from shoe-strings to stoves. There are men who want to buy, too, — buyers of old iron, of old rags, of old rubber. “Anny-ting, anny-ting vat you vill sell me, madame, I vill buy it,” said one, with outspread hands.

Cattle go by, great droves of them, being driven along the Road and sold from farm to farm until all are gone. I love the day that brings them. A dust haze down the Road, the mooing of cows and the baaing of calves, the shouts of the drovers, the sound of many hoofs, and the cattle are here. The farmer and the “hired man” leave their work and saunter out to the Road to “look ’em over,” the children come running out to watch the pretty creatures, sleek or tousled, soft-eyed or wild-eyed, yearlings with bits of horns, stocky

two-year-olds, and wabbly-legged youngsters hardly able to keep pace with the rest, all of them glad enough of the chance to pause in the shade and nibble at the rich, cool grass. One or two of the "critters" are approved of, perhaps, and bought, and the rest move on, the sunny dust haze rises and clears, the shouts of the drovers grow faint, and the Road is still again.

Men go by looking for work; they will clean your well for you, they will file your horses' teeth for you, they will mend your umbrellas and repair your clocks and sharpen your scissors. In the city, when we hear the scissors-grinder ding-ding-dinging along the street, we wonder in an impersonal way how he makes a living; but in the country we espy him from afar and are out at the gate to meet him, with all the scissors and knives in the house.

There are tramps, too, of course. Not the kind one finds near cities, or in crowded summer watering-places. Our Road does not lead to Rome, at least not very directly, and the tramp who chooses it is sure to be a mild and unenterprising creature, a desultory

tramp who does not really know his business. Some of the same ones come back year after year, and, in defiance of modern sociological science, we offer them the hospitality of the back porch with sandwiches and coffee, while we exchange the commonplaces of the season. It is the custom of the Road.

And so the procession of the Road moves on. If we wait long enough — and it is not so long either — everything goes by: gay wedding parties, christening parties, slow funerals, the Road bears them all; and to those who live beside it nothing is alien, nothing indifferent. Throughout the week the daytime is for business — remembering always that on the country Road business is never merely business, but always sociability too; the early evening is for pleasure; the night is for rest, for that stillness that cities never know, broken only when human necessity most sharply importunes, in the crises of birth, of death. On Sundays all the world drives to church, or sits on its doorstep and watches the rest. And Sunday and week days alike, every one's interest goes out to the Road.

I venture to say that when we think of our city homes we think of their interiors, but when we think of our farmhouse homes we think of the Road as well. They are like little islands in a river, — one remembers them together. For the Road is a river — a river of life. Most of our words about roads imply motion. A road comes, we say, and it goes, it sweeps, it curves, it climbs, it descends, it rises and drops, it bends and turns. And, in fact, it means movement, it is always bringing life and taking it again, or if for a time it does neither, it is always inviting, always promising. We have all felt it. As we are whirled along in a railway train even, the thing that stirs our imagination is the roads, the paths. I can still remember glimpses of these that I had years ago — a footpath over a rounded hilltop through long yellow grass, a rough logging-road beside a foaming mountain river, a brushy wood road leading through bars into deep shade, a country road at dusk, curving past a low farmhouse with lights in the windows. I could never follow these roads, but I remember them still, and still they allure me.

Our Road, as it flows placidly past our farm, suggests nothing very exciting or spectacular. It is a pretty bit of road, rounding a rocky corner of the farm and leading past the old house under cool depths of maple shade, out again into a broad space of sunlight, dropping over a little hill, around a curve, and out of sight. I know it well, of course, every rock and flower of it, but its final appeal to me is not through its beauty, it is not even through my sense of ownership in it; it is simply that it is a Road — a road that leads out of Everywhere into Everywhere Else, a road that goes on. About a road that ends there is no glamour. It may be pretty or useful, but as a road it is a failure. For the Road is the symbol of endless possibility. From the faintest footpath across a meadow, where as a child one has always felt that some elf or gnome *may* appear, or along which, if one were to wander with sufficient negligence, one *might* be led into the realm of “faerie” to the broad turnpike which fares through open country, plunges through the surging cities, and escapes to broad lands beyond — any path, any road, makes this appeal. And so

long as one has faith that what may be is more than what is, so long as one has the buoyant patience to await it or the will to go forth and seek it, so long as one has the imagination and the heart of the wayfarer, the charm of the Road will be potent.

X

The Lure of the Berry

MEN have sung the praises of fishing and hunting, they have extolled the joys of boating and riding, they have dwelt at length upon the pleasures of automobiling. But there is one — sport, shall I call it? — which no one seems to have thought worth mentioning : the gentle sport of berrying.

Perhaps calling it a sport is an unfortunate beginning; it gives us too much to live up to. No, it is not a sport, though I can't think why, since it is quite as active as drop-line fishing. Perhaps the trouble is with the game — the fish are more active than the berries, and their excesses cover the deficiencies of the stolid figure in the boat.

What, then, shall we call it? Not an occupation; it is too desultory for that; nor an amusement, because of a certain tradition of usefulness that hangs about it. Probably it belongs in that small but select group of

things that people do ostensibly because they are useful but really because they are fun. At any rate, it does not matter how we class it, — it is just berrying.

But not strawberrying. Strawberries are so far down, and so few! They cannot be picked with comfort by any one over six years old.

Nor blackberrying! Blackberries are good when gathered in, but in the gathering process there is nothing restful or soothing. They always grow in hot places, and the briars make you cross; they pull your hair and “sprout” your clothes and scratch your wrists. And the berries stain your fingers dark blue, and, moreover, they are frequented by those unpleasant little triangular, greenish-brown creatures known as squash bugs, which I do not believe even the Ancient Mariner could have been called upon to love. No, I do not mean blackberrying.

What then? What indeed but huckleberrying! How can I adequately sing the praises of the gentle, the neat, the comfortable huckleberry! No briars, no squash bugs, no back-breaking stoop or arm-rending stretch to

reach them. Just a big, bushy, green clump, full of glossy black or softly blue berries, and you can sit right down on the tussocks among them, put your pail underneath a bush, and begin. At first, the handfuls drop in with a high-keyed "plinking" sound; then, when the "bottom is covered," this changes to a soft patter altogether satisfactory; and as you sit stripping the crisp branches and letting the neat little balls roll through your fingers, your spirit grows calm within you, you feel the breeze, you look up now and then over stretches of hill, or pasture, or sky, and you settle into a state of complete acquiescence in things as they are.

For there is always a breeze, and always a view, at least where my huckleberries grow. If any one should ask me where to find a good situation for a house, I should answer, with a comprehensive wave of my arm, "Oh, choose any huckleberry patch." Only 't were pity to demolish so excellent a thing as a huckleberry patch, merely to erect so doubtful a thing as a house.

I know one such — a royal one even among huckleberry patches. To get to it you go up

an old road, — up, and up, and up, — you pass big fields, newmown and wide open to the sky, you get broader and broader outlooks over green woodland and blue rolling hills, with a bit of azure river in the midst. You come out on great flats of rock, thinly edged with light turf, and there before you are the “berry lots,” as the natives call them, — rolling, windy uplands, with nothing bigger than cedars and wild cherry trees to break their sweep. The berry bushes crowd together in thick-set patches, waist-high, interspersed with big “high-bush” shrubs in clumps or alone, low, hoary juniper, and great, dark masses of richly glossy, richly fragrant bay. The pointed cedars stand about like sentinels, stiff enough save where their sensitive tops lean delicately away from the wind. In the scant herbage between is goldenrod, the earliest and the latest alike at home here, and red lilies and asters, and down close to the ground, if you care to stoop for them, trailing vines of dewberries with their fruit, the sweetest of all the blackberries. Truly it is a goodly prospect, and one to fill the heart with satisfaction that the world is as it is.

The pleasure of huckleberrying is partly in the season — the late summer-time, from mid-July to September. The poignant joys of early spring are passed, and the exuberance of early summer, while the keen stimulus of fall has not yet come. Things are at poise. The haying is over, the meadows, shorn of their rich grass, lie tawny-green under the sky, and the world seems bigger than before. It is not a time for dreams nor a time for exploits; it is a time for — for — well, for berrying!

But you must choose your days carefully, as you do your fishing and hunting days. The berries “bite best” with a brisk west wind, though a south one is not to be despised, and a north one gives a pleasant suggestion of fall while the sun has still all the fervor of summer. Choose a sky that has clouds in it, too, for you will feel their movement even when you do not look up. Then take your pail and set out. Do not be in a hurry and do not promise to be back at any definite time. Either go alone or with just the right companion. I do not know any circumstances wherein the choice of a companion needs more care than in berrying. It may make or mar

the whole adventure. For you must have a person not too energetic, or a standard of speed will be established that will spoil everything; nor too conscientious — it is maddening to be told that you have not picked the bushes clean enough; nor too diligent, so that one feels guilty if one looks at the view or acknowledges the breeze; nor too restless, so that one is being constantly haled to fresh woods and pastures new. A slightly garrulous person is not bad, with a desultory, semi-philosophic bent, and a gift for being contented with easy physical occupation. In fact, I find that I am, by exclusion and inclusion, narrowing my description to fit a certain type of small boy. And indeed I believe that here the ideal companion is to be found, — if indeed he is not, as I more than suspect he is, the ideal companion for every form of recreation in life. Yes, the boy is the thing. Some of my choicest hours in the berry lots have been spent with a boy as companion, some boy who loves to be in the wind and sun without knowing that he loves it, who philosophizes without knowing that he does so, who picks berries with sufficient diligence some-

times, and with a delightful irresponsibility at other times; who likes to move on, now and then, but is happy to kick turf around the edges of the clump if you are inclined to stay. Who takes pride in filling his pail, but is not so desperately single-minded that he is unmoved by the seductions of goldenrod in bloom, of juniper and bayberries, of dry goldenrod stalks (for kite sticks), of deserted birds' nests, and all the other delights that fall in his way.

For berrying does not consist chiefly in getting berries, any more than fishing consists chiefly in getting fish, or hunting in getting birds. The essence of berrying is the state of mind that accompanies it. It is a semi-contemplative recreation, providing physical quiet with just enough motion to prevent restlessness — being, in this respect, like “whittling.” I said semi-contemplative, because, while it seems to induce meditation, the beauty of it is that you don't really meditate at all, you only think you are doing so, or are going to. That is what makes it so recuperative in its effects. It just delicately shaves the line between stimulating you to

thought and boring you because it does not stimulate. Thus it brings about in you a perfect state of poise most restful in itself and in a complete harmony with the midsummer season.

Yes, fishing is good, and hunting is good, and all the sports are good in their turn — even sitting in a rocking-chair on a boarding-house piazza has, perhaps, its charms and its benefits for some; — but when the sun is hot and the wind is cool, when the hay is in and the yellowing fields lie broad, when the woods have gathered their birds and their secrets to their very hearts, when the sky is deeply, warmly blue, and the clouds pile soft or float thin and light, then give me a pail and let me wander up, up, to the great open berry lots. I will let the sun shine on me and the wind blow me, and I will love the whole big world, and I will think not a single thought, and at sundown I will come home with a full pail and a contentedly empty mind.

XI

In the Rain

It was raining. It had begun to rain the afternoon before; it had rained all night, with the drizzling, sozzling kind of rain that indicated persistence. It had rained all the morning; it was obviously going to rain all day. The hollow beside the stone hitching-post, where the grocer's horse and the butcher's horse and the fishman's horse had stamped, all through the drought, was now a pool of brown water, with the raindrops making gooseflesh on it. There was another pond under the front gate, and another under the hammock; and the middle of the road, in the horse rut, was a narrow brown brook. The tiger lilies in the old stump were bending with their load of wetness, the phlox in the garden was weighed down till its white masses nearly touched earth. Indoors, when the wind lulled and the rain fell straighter, we could hear the drops tick-tick-ticking on the bark of

the birch logs in the fireplace. This flue of the chimney is almost vertical, with a slant to the southward, and I have always liked the way it lets in samples of the weather — a patch of yellow sunshine on clear days, a blur of soft white light on gray ones, and on stormy ones flicks of rain to make the fire sputter, or, as on this particular day, to dampen our kindling if it has been laid ready to light.

The belated postman's buggy, with presumably a postman inside it somewhere behind the sheathing of black rubber, drove up, our mail-box grated open and shut, and the streaming horse sloshed on. Jonathan turned up his collar and dashed out to the box, and dashed in again, bringing with him a great gust of rainy sweetness and the smell of wet woolen.

"Jonathan," I said, "let's take a walk."

He was unfolding the damp newspaper carefully so as not to tear it. "What's that? Walk?"

"That's what I said."

He had his paper open by this time, and was glancing at the headlines. When a man

is glancing at headlines, it is just as well to let him glance. I gave him fifteen minutes. Then I reopened the matter.

"Jonathan, I said walk."

"What's that?" His tone was vague. It was what I call his newspaper tone. It suggests extreme remoteness, but tolerance, even benevolence, if he is let alone. He drifted slowly over to the window and made a pretense of looking out, but his eyes were still running down the columns. "My dear," he remarked, still in the same tone, "had you noticed that it is beginning to rain?"

"I noticed that yesterday afternoon, about three o'clock," I said.

"Oh, all right. I thought perhaps you had n't."

"Well?" I waited.

"Well —" he hung fire while he finished the tail of the editorial. Then he threw down the paper. "Don't you think it's rather poor weather for walking?"

This was what I had been waiting for, and I responded glibly, "Some one has said there is no such thing as bad weather, there are only good clothes."

"Do you mean mine?" He grinned down at his farm regimentals.

"Well, then —"

"Why, of course, if you really mean it," he said, and added, as he looked out reflectively at the puddling road, "You'll get your hair wet."

"Hope so! Now, Jonathan, are n't you silly, really? Anybody would think we'd never been for a walk in the rain before in our lives. Perhaps you'd rather stay indoors and be a tabby-cat and keep dry."

"Who got the mail?"

"You did. But you wanted the paper — and you ran."

The fact was, as I very well knew, Jonathan really wanted to go, but he did n't want to start. When people really enjoy doing a thing, and mean to do it, and yet won't get going, something has to be done to get them going. That was why I spoke of tabby-cats.

Jonathan assumed an alert society tone. "I should enjoy a walk very much, thank you," he said; "the weather seems to me perfect. But," he added abruptly, "wear woolen; that white thing won't do."

“Of course!” I went off and made myself fit — woolen for warmth, though the day was not cold, a short khaki skirt, an old felt hat, and old shoes. Out we went into the drenched world. Whish! A gust of rain in my eyes half blinded me, and I ran under the big maples. I heard Jonathan chuckle. “I can’t help it,” I gasped; “I’ll be wet enough in a few minutes, and then I shan’t care.”

From the maples I made for the lee of the barn eaves, disturbing the hens who were sulking there. They stepped ostentatiously out into the rainy barnyard with an air of pointedly *not* noticing me, but of knowing all the time whose fault it was. They were n’t liking the weather, anyhow, the hens were n’t, and showed it plainly in the wet, streaky droop of their feathers and the exasperated look in their red eyes. “Those hens look as if they thought I could do something about it if I only would,” I said to Jonathan as we passed them.

“Yes, they are n’t a cordial crowd. Here, we’ll show them how to take weather!”

We were passing under an apple tree; Jona-

than seized a drooping bough, and a sheet of water shook itself out on our shoulders. I gasped and ducked, and a hen who stood too near scuttered off with low cluckings of indignation.

"Now you're really wet, you can enjoy yourself," said Jonathan; and there was something in it, though I was loath to admit it at the moment. A moment before I had felt rather appalled at the sight of the rain-swept lane; now I hastened on recklessly.

"I think," said Jonathan, "it's the back of my neck that counts. After that's wet I don't care what happens."

"Yes," I agreed, "that's a stronghold. But I think with me it's my shoulders."

It did not really matter which it was; neck and shoulders both were wet, — back, arms, everything. We tramped down across the hollow, over the brook, whose flood was backing up into the swamp on each side. I paused to look off across the huckleberry hillside beyond.

"How the rain changes everything!" I said.

All the colors had freshened and darkened, and the blur of the rain softened the picture

and "brought it together," as the painters say.

"Well," said Jonathan, "woods or open?"

"Which is the wettest?"

"Woods."

"Then woods."

And we plunged in under the big chestnuts, through a mass of witch-hazel and birch.

Jonathan was quite right. Woods were the wettest. One can hardly fancy anything quite so wet. Solid water, like a river, is not comparable, because it is all in one lump; you know where it is, and you can get out of it when you want to. But here in the woods the water was everywhere, ready to hurl itself upon us, from above, from beside us, from below. Every step, every motion, drew upon us drenching showers of great drops that had been hanging heavily in the leaves ready to break away at a touch. Little streamlets of water ran from the drooping edges of my hat and from my chin, water dashed in my eyes and I blinked it out.

Jonathan, pausing to hold back a dripping spray of blackberry, heavy with fruit, remarked, "Are n't you getting a little damp?"

"I wonder if I am!" I answered joyously, and plunged on into the next thicket.

There is as much exhilaration in being out in a big rain and getting really rained through, as there is in being out in surf. It has nothing in common with the sensations that arise when, umbrellaed and mackintoshed and rubber-overshoed, we pick our way gingerly along the street, wondering how much we can keep dry, hoping everything is "up" all round, wishing the wind would n't keep changing and blowing the umbrella so, and fancying how we shall look when we "get there." But when you don't care — when you want to get wet, and do — there is a physical glow that is delightful, a sense of being washed through and through, of losing one's identity almost, and being washed away into the great swirl of nature where one does n't count much, but is glad to be taken in as a part. I fancy this is true with any of the elements — earth, air, water. The tale of Antæus was no mere legend; there is real strength for us in close contact with the earth. There is a purifying and uplifting potency in the winds, a potency in the waters — ocean and river and great rain.

Our civilization has dealt with all these so successfully that we are apt to think of them as docile servants, or perhaps as petty annoyances, and we lose the sense of their power unless we deliberately go out to meet them in their own domain and let them have their way with us. Then, indeed, they sweep us out of ourselves for a season, and that is good.

We came out from the thickets on a high, brushy field, sheeted in fine rain that dimmed even the near wood edges. Blackberries grew thick, and we made our way carefully among the briars, following the narrow and devious cow-paths. Suddenly we both stopped. Just ahead of us, under a blackberry bush, was a huge snapping-turtle. He was standing on his hind legs, with his fore legs resting on a branch loaded with fruit, his narrow dark head stretched far up and out, while he quietly ate berry after berry. He was a handsome fellow, with his big black shell all brilliant in the wetness of the rain. As he worked we could see his under side, and notice how it shaded to yellow along the sutures. It was a scene of contentment, and the berries, drip-

ping with fresh raindrops, looked luscious indeed as he feasted.

We stood and watched him for a while, and I got an entirely new idea of turtles. Turtles usually have too much reserve, too much self-consciousness, too little *abandon*, and I had never seen one so “come out of himself,” literally and figuratively, as this fellow did. It made me want to follow up the acquaintance, this happy chance of finding him, so to speak, in his cups; but I repressed the desire, feeling that he might not share it, and we carefully backed away and went around by another path so as not to disturb the reveler. He never knew how much pleasure he had given as well as received.

Into the woods again — “Look out!” said Jonathan. “Don’t step on the lizards!”

He stooped and picked up one, which struck an attitude among his dripping fingers — sleek back a little arched, legs in odd, uncouth positions, tail set stiffly in a queer curve. They are brilliant little creatures, with their clear orange-red coats, scarlet-spotted, like a trout.

“Pretty little chap, is n’t he?” said Jonathan.

"Stylish," I said, "but foolish. They never do anything that I can see, except attitudinize."

"But they do a great deal of that," said Jonathan, as he set him gently down.

"Come on," I said; "I can't stand here being sentimental over your pets. It's raining."

"Oh, if you'd like to *go* — " said Jonathan, and set a pace.

I followed hard, and we raced down through the empty woods, sliding over the great wet rocks, rolling over black fallen tree trunks, our feet sinking noiselessly in the soft leaf mould of the forest floor. Out again, and through the edge of a cornfield where the broad, wavy ribbon leaves squeaked as we thrust them aside, as only corn leaves can squeak. If we had not been wet already, this would have finished us. There is nothing any wetter than a wet cornfield.

On over the open pastures, with a grassy swamp at the bottom. We tramped carelessly through it, not even looking for tussocks, and the water sucked merrily in and out of our shoes. Into brush once more —

thick hazel and scrub oak; then down a slope, and we were in the hemlock ravine — a wonderful bit of tall woods, dark-shadowed, solemn, hardly changed by the rain, only perhaps a thought darker and stiller, with deeper blue depths of hazy distance between the straight black trunks. At the bottom a brook with dark pools lying beneath mossy rock ledges, or swirling under great hemlock roots, little waterfalls, and shallow rapids over smooth-worn rock faces. It is a wonderful place, a place for a German fairy tale.

The woods were empty — in a sense, yes. Except for the lizards, the animals run to cover during the rain; woodchucks, rabbits, squirrels, are tucked away somewhere out of sight and sound. Bird notes are hushed; the birds, lurking close-reefed under the lee of the big branches or the heavy foliage, or at the heart of the cedar trees, make no sign as we pass.

Empty, yet not lonely. When the sun is out and the sky is high and bright, one feels that the world is a large place, belonging to many creatures. But when the sky shuts down and the world is close-wrapped in rain and

drifting mist, it seems to grow smaller and more intimate. Instead of feeling the multitudinousness of the life of woods and fields, one feels its unity. We are brought together in the bonds of the rain — we and all the hidden creatures — we seem all in one room together.

Thus swept into the unity of a dominating mood, the woods sometimes gain a voice of their own. I heard it first on a stormy night when I was walking along the wood road to meet Jonathan. It was a night of wind and rain and blackness — blackness so dense that it seemed a real thing, pressing against my eyes, so complete that at the fork in the roads I had to feel with my hand for the wheel ruts in order to choose the right one. As I grew accustomed to the swish of the rain in my face and the hoarse breath of the wind about my ears I became aware of another sound — a background of tone. I thought at first it was a child calling, but no, it was not that; it was not a call, but a song; and not that either — it was more like many voices, high but not shrill, and very far away, softly intoning. It was neither sad nor joyous; it suggested

dreamy, reiterant thoughts; it was not music, but the memory of music. If one listened too keenly, it was gone, like a faint star which can be glimpsed only if one looks a little away from it.

As I had listened that night I began to wonder if it was all my own fancy, and when I met Jonathan I made him stop.

"Wait a minute," I begged him, "and listen."

"I hear it. Come on," he had said. Supper was in his thoughts.

"What do you hear?"

"Just what you do."

"What's that?" I had persisted, as we fumbled our way along.

"Voices — I don't know what you'd call it — the woods. It often sounds like that in a big rain."

Jonathan's matter-of-factness had rather pleased me.

"I thought it might be my imagination. I'm glad it was n't," I said.

"Perhaps it's both our imaginations," he suggested.

"No. We both do lots of imagining, but

it never overlaps. When it does, it shows it's so."

Perhaps I was not very clear, but he seemed to understand.

Since then I have heard it now and again, this singing of the rain-swept woods. Not often, for it is a capricious thing, or perhaps I ought rather to say I do not understand the manner of its uprising. Rain alone will not bring it to pass, wind alone will not, and sometimes even when they are importuned by wind and rain together the woods are silent. Perhaps, too, it is not every stretch of woods that can sing, or at all seasons. In winter they can whistle, and sigh, and creak, but I am sure that when I have heard these singing voices the trees have always had their full leafage. But however it comes about, I am glad of the times that I have heard it. And whenever I read tales of the Wild Huntsman and all his kind, there come into my mind as an interpreting background memories of wonderful black nights and storm-ridden woods swept by overtones of distant and elusive sound.

We did not hear the woods sing that day. Perhaps there was not wind enough, or per-

haps the woods on the "home piece" are not big enough, for it chances that I have never heard the sound there.

As we came up the lane at dusk we saw the glimmer of the house lights.

"Does n't that look good?" I said to Jonathan. "And won't it be good when we are all dry and in front of the fire and you have your pipe and I'm making toast?"

I am perfectly sure that Jonathan agreed with me, but what he said was, "I thought you came out for pleasure."

"Well, can't I come home for pleasure too?" I asked.

XII

As the Bee Flies

JONATHAN had taken me to see the "bee tree" down in the "old John Lane lot." Judging from the name, the spot must have been a clearing at one time, but now it is one of the oldest pieces of woodland in the locality. The bee tree, a huge chestnut, cut down thirty years ago for its store of honey, is sinking back into the forest floor, but we could still see its hollow heart and charred sides where the fire had been made to smoke out the bees.

"Jonathan," I said, "I'd like to find some wild honey. It sounds so good."

"No better than tame honey," said Jonathan.

"It sounds better. I'm sure it would be different scooped out of a tree like this than done up neatly in pound squares."

"Tastes just the same," persisted Jonathan prosaically.

"Well, anyway, I want to find a bee tree. Let's go bee-hunting!"

"What's the use? You don't know a honeybee from a bumblebee."

"Well, you do, of course," I answered, tactfully.

Jonathan, mollified, became gracious. "I never went bee-hunting, but I've heard the old fellows tell how it's done. But it takes all day."

"So much the better," I said.

And that night I looked through our books to find out what I could about bees. Over the fireplace in what was once the "best parlor" is a long, low cupboard with glass doors. Here Bibles, albums, and a few other books have always been stored, and from this I pulled down a fat, gilt-lettered volume called "The Household Friend." This book has something to say about almost everything, and, sure enough, it had an article on bees. But the Household Friend had obviously never gone bee-hunting, and the only real information I got was that bees had four wings and six legs.

"So has a fly," said Jonathan, when I came to him with this nugget of wisdom.

The neighbors gave suggestions. "You want to go when the yeller-top's in bloom," said one.

"Yellow-top?" I questioned, stupidly enough.

"Yes. Yeller-top—'t's in bloom now," with a comprehensive wave of the hand.

"Oh, you mean goldenrod!"

"Well, I guess you call it that. Yeller-top we call it. You find one o' them old back fields where the yeller-top's come in, 'n' you'll see bees 'nough."

Another friend told us that when we had caught our bee we must drop honey on her back. This would send her to the hive to get her friends to groom her off, and they would all return with her to see where the honey came from. This sounded improbable, but we were in no position to criticize our information.

As to the main points of procedure all our advisers agreed. We were to put honey in an open box, catch a bee in it, and when she had loaded up with honey, let her go, watch her flight and locate the direction of her home. When she returned with friends for more

honey, we were to shut them in, carry the box on in the line of flight, and let them go again. We were to keep this up until we reached the bee tree. It sounded simple.

We got our box — two boxes, to be sure of our resources — baited them with chunks of comb, and took along little window panes for covers. Then we packed up luncheon and set out for an abandoned pasture in our woods where we remembered the “yeller-top” grew thick. Our New England fall mornings are cool, and as we walked up the shady wood road Jonathan predicted that it would be no use to hunt bees. “They’ll be so stiff they can’t crawl. Look at that lizard, now!” He stooped and touched a little red newt lying among the pebbles of the roadway. The little fellow seemed dead, but when Jonathan held him in the hollow of his hand for a few moments he gradually thawed out, began to wriggle, and finally dropped through between his fingers and scampered under a stone. “See?” said Jonathan. “We’ll have to thaw out every bee just that way.”

But I had confidence that the sun would take the place of Jonathan’s hand, and re-

fused to give up my hunt. From the main log-road we turned off into a path, once a well-trodden way to the old ox pastures, but now almost overgrown, and pushed on through brier and sweet-fern and huckleberry and young birch, down across a little brook, and up again to the "old Sharon lot," a long field framed in big woods and grown up to sumac and brambles and goldenrod. It was warmer here, in the steady sunshine, sheltered from the crisp wind by the tree walls around us, and we began to look about hopefully for bees. At first Jonathan's gloomy prognostications seemed justified — there was not a bee in sight. A few wasps were stirring, trailing their long legs as they flew. Then one or two "yellow jackets" appeared, and some black-and-white hornets. But as the field grew warmer it grew populous, bumblebees hummed, and finally some little soft brown bees arrived — surely the ones we wanted. Cautiously Jonathan approached one, held his box under the goldenrod clump, brought the glass down slowly from above — and the bee was ours. She was a gentle little thing, and did not seem to resent her treatment at all, but dropped

down on to the honeycomb and fell to work. Jonathan had providently cut a three-forked stick, and he now stuck this into the ground and set the box on the forks so that it was about on a level with the goldenrod tops. Then he carefully drew off the glass, and we sat down to watch.

"Should n't you think she must have had enough?" I said, after a while — "Oh! there she comes now!"

Our bee appeared on the edge of the box, staggering heavily. She rubbed her legs, rubbed her wings, shook herself, girded up her loins, as it were, and brushed the hair out of her eyes, and finally rose, turning on herself in a close spiral which widened into larger and larger circles above the box, and at length, after two or three wide sweeps where we nearly lost track of her, she darted off in a "bee-line" for a tall chestnut tree on a knoll to the westward.

"Will she come back?" we wondered. Five minutes — ten — fifteen — it seemed an hour.

"She must have been a drone," said Jonathan.

“Or maybe she was n’t a honeybee at all,” I suggested, gloomily. “She might be just another kind of hornet—no, look! There she is!”

I could hardly have been more thrilled if my fairy godmother had appeared on the goldenrod stalk and waved her wand at me. To think that the bee really did play the game! I knelt and peered in over the side of the box. Yes, there she was, all six feet in the honey, pumping away with might and main through her little red tongue, or proboscis, or whatever it was. We sank back among the weeds and waited for her to go. As she rose, in the same spirals, and disappeared westward, Jonathan said, “If she does n’t bring another one back with her this time, we’ll try dropping honey on her back. You wait here and be a landmark for the bee while I try to catch another one in the other box.”

I settled down comfortably under the yellow-top, and instantly I realized what a pleasant thing it is to be a landmark. For one thing, when you sit down in a field you get a very different point of view from that when you stand. Goldenrod is different looked at from beneath, with sky beyond it; sky is dif-

ferent seen through waving masses of yellow. Moreover, when you sit still outdoors, the life of things comes to you; when you are moving yourself, it evades you. Down among the weeds where I sat, the sun was hot, but the breeze was cool, and it brought to me, now the scent of wild grapes from an old stone wall, now the spicy fragrance of little yellow apples on a gnarled old tree in the fence corner, now the sharp tang of the goldenrod itself. The air was full of the hum of bees, and soon I began to distinguish their different tones — the deep, rich drone of the bumblebees, the higher singsong of the honeybees, the snarl of the yellow-jacket, the jerky, nasal twang of the black-and-white hornet. They began to come close around me; two bumblebees hung on a frond of goldenrod so close to my face that I could see the pollen dust on their fur. Crickets and grasshoppers chirped and trilled beside me. All the little creatures seemed to have accepted me — all but one black-and-white hornet, who left his proper pursuits, whatever they may have been, to investigate me. He buzzed all around me in an insistent, ill-bred way that was annoying.

He examined my neck and hair with unnecessary thoroughness, flew away, returned to begin all over again, flew away and returned once more; but at last even he gave up the matter and went off about his business.

Butterflies came fluttering past me:—big, rust-colored ones pointed in black; pale russet and silver ones; dancing little yellow ones; big black ones with blue-green spots, rather shabby and languid, as at the end of a gay season. Darning-needles darted back and forth, with their javelin-like flight, or mounted high by sudden steps, or lighted near me, with that absolute rigidity that is the positive negation of movement. A flying grasshopper creeping along through the tangle at my feet rose and hung flutteringly over one spot, for no apparent reason, and then, for no better reason, dropped suddenly and was still. A big cicada with green head and rustling wings worked his way clumsily among a pile of last year's goldenrod stalks, freed himself, and whirled away with the harsh, strident buzz that dominates every other sound while it lasts, and when it ceases makes the world seem wonderfully quiet.

Our bee had gone and come twice before Jonathan returned. "Has n't she brought anybody yet? Well, here goes!" He took a slender stem of goldenrod, smeared it with honey, and gently lodged a drop on the bee's back, just where she could not by any possible antics get it off for herself. When the little thing flew she fairly reeled under her burden, tumbled down on to a leaf, recovered herself, and at last flew off on her old line.

"Now, let's go and cook luncheon," said Jonathan, "and leave her to work it out."

"But how can I move? I'm a landmark."

"Oh, leave your handkerchief. Anything white will do."

So I tied my handkerchief to a goldenrod stalk, and we went back to the brook. We made a fire on a flat stone, under which we could hear the brook running, broiled our chops on long, forked sticks, broiled some "beefsteak" mushrooms that we had found on a chestnut stump, and ended with water from the spring under the giant birch tree. Blue jays came noisily to investigate us; a yellow-hammer floated softly down to the branch

overhead, gave a little purring cluck of surprise, and flew off again, with a flare of tawny-yellow wings. In the warmth of the Indian summer noon the shade of the woods was pleasant, and I let Jonathan go back to the bees while I lay on a dry slope above the brook and watched the slim, tall chestnuts swaying in the wind. It is almost like being at sea to lie in the woods and look up at the trees. Their waving tops seem infinitely far away, but the sky beyond seems very near, and one can almost feel the earth go round.

As I lay there I heard a snapping of twigs and rustling of leaves. It was the wrong direction for Jonathan, and I turned gently, expecting nothing smaller than a deer — for deer are growing plentiful now in old New England — and met the shameless face of a jerky little red squirrel! He clung to a chestnut trunk and examined me, twitching all over the while, then whisked himself upside down and looked at me from that standpoint, mounted to a branch, clung to the under side and looked again, pretended fright and vanished behind the limb, only to peer over it the next moment to see what I looked like from there — all the

time clucking and burring like an alarm clock under a pillow.

The rude thing had broken the spell of quiet, and I got up, remembering the bees, and wandered back to the sunny field, now palpitating with waves of heat. Jonathan was nowhere to be seen, but as I approached the box I discovered him beside it flat on his back among the weeds.

"Sh-h-h," he warned, "don't frighten them. There were a lot of them when I got here and I've been watching their line. They all go straight for that chestnut."

"What are you lying down for?" I asked.

"I had to. I nearly twisted my neck off following their circles. I'm no owl."

I sat down near by and we watched a few more go, while others began to arrive.

"That dab of honey did the work," said Jonathan. "We might as well begin to follow up their line now."

Waiting till there were a dozen or more in the box, he gently slid on the glass cover, laid a paper over it to darken it, and we set out. Ten minutes' walking brought us past the big chestnut and out to a little clearing. Jonathan

set the box down on a big rock where it would show up well, laid a handkerchief beside it, drew off the glass, and crouched. A bunch of excited bees burst out and away, without noticing their change of place. "They'll never find their way back there," said Jonathan regretfully; "they'll go straight back to the Sharon lot."

But there were others in the box, still feeding, who had not been disturbed by the move, and these he touched with honey drops. They staggered off, one by one, orienting themselves properly as they rose, and taking the same old line off to the westward. This was disappointing. We had hoped to see them turn back, showing that we had passed their home tree. However, there was nothing to do but sit and wait for them. In six minutes they began to come back, in twos and threes — evidently the honey drops on their shoulders had told the hive a sufficiently alluring story. Again we waited until the box was well filled with them, then closed it and went on westward. Two more moves brought us to a half-cleared ridge from which we could see out across country. To the westward, and sadly

near, was the end of the big woods and the beginning of pastures and farmland.

Jonathan scrutinized the farms dotting the slopes. "See that bunch of red barns with a white house?" he said. "That's Bill Morehead's. He keeps bees. Bet we've got bees from his hive and they'll lead us plumb into his back yard."

It did begin to seem probable, and we took up our box in some depression of spirits. Two more stops, the bees still perversely flying westward, and we emerged in pastures.

"Here's our last stop," said Jonathan. "If they don't go back into that edge we've just left, they're Morehead's. There is n't another bit of woods big enough to hold a bee tree for seven miles to the west of us."

There was no rock to set the box on, so we lay down on the turf; Jonathan set the box on his chest, and partly slid the cover. He had by this time learned the trick of making the bees, even the excited ones, come out singly. We watched each one as she escaped circle above us, circle, circle against the clear blue of the afternoon sky, then dart off — alas! — westward. As the last one flew we

sat up, disconsolately, and gazed across the pasture.

"Tame bees!" muttered Jonathan, in a tone of grief and disgust. "Tame bees, down there in my old woodlots. It's trespass!"

"You might claim some of Morehead's honey," I suggested, "since you've been feeding his bees. But, then," I reflected, "it would n't be wild honey, and what I wanted was wild honey."

We rose dejectedly, and Jonathan picked up the box. "Are n't you going to leave it for the bees?" I asked. "They'll be so disappointed when they come back."

"They are n't the only ones to be disappointed," he remarked grimly. "Here, we'll have mushrooms for supper, anyway." And he stooped to collect a big puff-ball.

We walked home, our spirits gradually rising. After all, it is hard to stay depressed under a blue fall sky, with a crisp wind blowing in your face and the sense of completeness that comes of a long day out of doors. And as we climbed the last long hill to the home farm we could not help feeling cheerful.

“Bee-hunting is fun,” I said, “even if they are tame bees.”

“It’s the best excuse for being a loafer that I’ve found yet,” said Jonathan; “I wonder the tramps don’t all go into the business.”

“And some day,” I pursued hopefully, “we’ll go again and find really wild bees and really wild honey.”

“It would taste just the same, you know,” jeered Jonathan.

And I was so content with life that I let him have the last word.

XIII

A Dawn Experiment

I HAVE tried dawn fishing, and found it wanting. I have tried dawn hunting in the woods, after "partridges," and found it not all that Jonathan, in his buoyant enthusiasm, appears to think it. And so, when he grew eloquent regarding the delights of dawn hunting on the marshes, I was not easily fired. I even referred, though very considerably, to some of our previous experiences in affairs of this nature, and confessed a certain reluctance to experiment further along these lines.

"Well, you have had a run of hard luck," he admitted tolerantly, "but you'll find the plover-shooting different. I know you won't be sorry."

I do not mean to be narrow or prejudiced, and so I consented, though rather hesitatingly, to try one more dawn adventure.

We packed up our guns, ammunition, extra wraps, rubber boots, and alarm clock. These

five things are essential — nay, six are necessary to real content, and the sixth is a bottle of tar and sweet oil. But of that more anon.

Thus equipped, we went down to a tiny cottage on the shore. We reached the village at dusk, stopped at “the store” to buy bread and butter and fruit, then went on to the little white house that we knew would always be ready to receive us. It has served us as a hunting-lodge many times before, and has always treated us well.

There is something very pleasant about going back to a well-known place of this sort. It offers the joy of home and the joy of camping, the charm of strangeness and the charm of familiarity. We light the candles and look about. Ah, yes! There are the magazines we left last winter when we came down for the duck-shooting, there is the bottle of ink we got to fill our pens one stormy day last spring in the trout season, when the downpour quenched the zeal even of Jonathan. In the pantry are the jars of sugar and salt and cereals and tea and coffee and bacon; in the kitchen are the oil stoves ready to light; in the dining-room are the ashes of our last fire.

Contentedly I set about making tea and arranging the supper-table, while Jonathan took a basket and pitcher and went off to a neighbor for eggs and milk. We made a fire on the hearth, toasted bread over the embers, and supped frugally but very cozily.

Afterwards came the setting of the alarm clock — a matter of critical importance.

“What hour shall it be?” inquired Jonathan, his finger on the regulator.

“Whenever you think best,” I answered cheerfully.

Now, as we both understood, I had no real intention of being literally guided by what Jonathan thought best, — that would have been too rash, — but it opened negotiations pleasantly to say so.

Jonathan, trying to be obliging against his better judgment, suggested, “Well — six o’clock?”

But I refused any such tremendous concession, knowing that I should have to bear the ignominy of it if the adventure proved unfortunate. “No, of course not. Six is much too late. Anybody can get up at six.”

“Well, then,” he brightened; “say five?”

"Five," I meditated. "No, it's quite light at five. We ought to be out there at daylight, you said."

Jonathan visibly expanded. He realized that I was behaving very well. I thought so myself, and it made us both very amiable.

"Yes," he admitted, "we ought to be, of course. And it will take three quarters of an hour to drive out there. Add fifteen minutes to that for breakfast, and fifteen minutes to dress — would a quarter to four be too outrageous?"

"Oh, make it half-past three," I rejoined recklessly, in a burst of self-sacrifice.

At least I would not spoke our wheels by slothfulness. The clock was set accordingly, and I went to sleep enveloped in virtue as in a garment, the sound of the sea in my ears.

Br-r-r-r-r-r-r-r! What *has* happened? Oh, the alarm clock! It can't be more than twelve o'clock. I hear the spit of a match, then "Half-past three," from Jonathan. "No!" I protest. "Yes," he persists, and though his voice is still veiled in sleep, I detect in it a firmness to which I foresee I shall

yield. My virtue of last night has faded completely, but his zeal is fast colors. I am ready to back out, but, dimly remembering my Spartan attitude of the night before, I don't dare. Thus are we enslaved by our virtues. I submit, with only one word of comment — "And we call this pleasure!" To which Jonathan wisely makes no response.

We groped our way downstairs, lighted another candle, and sleepily devoured some sandwiches and milk—a necessary but cheerless process, with all the coziness of the night before conspicuously left out. We heard the carriage being brought up outside, we snatched up our wraps, — sweaters, shawls, coats, — Jonathan picked up the valise with the hunting equipment, we blew out the candles, and went out into the chilly darkness. As our eyes became accustomed to the change, we perceived that the sky was not quite black, but gray, and that the stars were fewer than in the real night. We got in, tucked ourselves up snugly, and started off down the road stretching faintly before us. The horse's steps sounded very loud, and echoed curiously against the silent houses as we passed. As we

went on, the sky grew paler, here and there in the houses a candle gleamed, in the barnyards a lantern flashed — the farmer was astir. Yes, dawn was really coming.

After a few miles we turned off the main highway to take the rut road through the great marsh. The smell of the salt flats was about us, and the sound of the sea was growing more clear again. A big bird whirred off from the marsh close beside us. "Meadowlark," murmured Jonathan. Another little one, with silent, low flight, then more. "Sandpipers," he commented; "we don't want them." The patient horse plodded along, now in damp marsh soil, now in dry, deep sand, to the hitching-place by an old barn on the cliff.

As we pulled up, Jonathan took a little bottle out of his pocket and handed it to me. "Better put it on now," he said.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Tar and sweet oil — for the mosquitoes."

I smelled of it with suspicion. It was a dark, gummy liquid. "I think I prefer the mosquitoes."

"You do!" said Jonathan. "You'll think again pretty soon. Here, let me have it." He

had tied the horse and blanketed him, and now proceeded to smear himself with the stuff — face, neck, hands. “You need n’t look at me that way!” he remarked genially; “you’ll be doing it yourself soon. Just wait.”

We took our guns and cartridges, and plunged down from the cliff to the marsh. As we did so there rose about me a brown cloud, which in a moment I realized was composed of mosquitoes — a crazy, savage, bloodthirsty mob. They beset me on all sides, — they were in my hair, my eyes, nose, ears, mouth, neck. I brushed frantically at them, but a drowning man might as well try to brush back the water as it closes in.

“Where’s the bottle?” I gasped.

“What bottle?” said Jonathan, innocently. Jonathan is human.

“The tar and sweet oil. Quick!”

“Oh! I thought you preferred the mosquitoes.” Yes, Jonathan *is* human.

“Never mind what you *thought!*” and I snatched greedily at the blessed little bottle.

I poured the horrid stuff on my face, my neck, my hands, I out-Jonathaned Jonathan; then I took a deep breath of relief as the mos-

quito mob withdrew to a respectful distance. Jonathan reached for the bottle.

"Oh, I can just as well carry it," I said, and tucked it into one of my hunting-coat pockets.

Jonathan chuckled gently, but I did not care. Nothing should part me from that little bottle of ill-smelling stuff.

We started on again, out across the marsh. Enough light had come to show us the gray-green level, full of mists and little glimmers of water, and dotted with low haycocks, their dull, tawny yellow showing softly in the faint dawn light.

"Hark!" said Jonathan.

We paused. Through the fog came a faint, whistling call, in descending half-tones, indescribable, coming out of nowhere, sounding now close beside us, now very far away.

"Yellowlegs," said Jonathan. "We are n't a bit too soon."

We pushed out into the midst of the marsh, now sinking knee-deep in the spongy bed, now walking easily on a stretch of firm turf, now stepping carefully over a boundary ditch of unknown depth — out to the haycocks, where

we sank down, each beside one, to wait for the birds to move.

I do not know how long we waited. The haycock was warm, the night wind had fallen, the gray sky was turning white, with primrose tones in the east; the morning star paled and disappeared; the marsh mists partly lifted, and revealed far inland the soft, dark masses of encircling woods. And every little while came the whistling call, plaintive, yet curiously hurried, coming from nowhere. I lay back against the hay, and, contrary to orders, I let my gun slip down beside me. The fact was, I had half forgotten that anything definite was expected of me, and when suddenly I heard a warning "Look out!" from Jonathan's mow, I was in no way prepared. There was a rush of wings; the air was full of the whistling notes of the birds as they flew; they passed over us, circling, rising, sinking, sweeping far up the marsh, then, as Jonathan whistled their call, circling back again out of the mist at incredible speed.

Probably it would have made no difference if I had been prepared. A new kind of game always leaves me dazed, and now I watched

them, spellbound, until I heard Jonathan shoot. Then I made a great effort, pulled at my trigger, and rolled backwards from my haycock into the spongy swamp, inches deep with water just there.

Jonathan called across softly, "Shot both barrels, did n't you?"

I rose slowly, wishing there were some way of wringing out my entire back. "Of course not!" I gasped indignantly.

"Think not?" very benevolently from the other cock. "'T would n't have kicked like that if you had n't. Look at your gun and see."

I reseated myself damply upon the haycock. "I tell you I *did n't*. Why should I shoot both at once, I'd like to know! I — never —"

Here I stopped, for as I broke open my gun I saw two dented cartridges, and as I pulled them out white smoke rolled from both barrels. There seemed nothing further to be said, at least by a woman, so I said nothing. Jonathan also, though human, said nothing. It is crises like these that test character. I turned my cool back to the east, that the rising sun, if it ever really got thoroughly risen, might

warm it, and grimly reloaded. Jonathan continued his call to the birds, and when they returned again I behaved better.

By seven o'clock the birds had scattered, and we left our places to go back to the horse. On the way we encountered two hunters wandering rather disconsolately over the marsh. They stopped us to ask what luck, and we tried not to look too self-satisfied, but probably they read our success in our arrogant faces, streaked with tar and sweet oil as they were. Possibly the bulge of our hunting-coat pockets helped to tell the story.

"How long have you been out here?" they asked enviously.

"Two hours or so," said Jonathan.

"How'd you get out so early?"

"We got up early," said Jonathan, with admirable simplicity.

The strangers looked at him twice to see if he meant to jeer, but he appeared impenetrably innocent, and they finally laughed, a little ruefully, and went on out into the marsh we were just leaving. Why does it make one feel so immeasurably superior to get up a few hours before other people?

We drove home along the sunny road, where the bakers' carts and meat wagons were already astir. Could it be the same road that a few hours before had been so cold and gray and still? Were these bare white houses the same that had nestled so cozily into the dark of the roadside? We reached our own plain little white house and went in. In the dining-room our candles and the remains of our midnight breakfast on the table seemed like relics of some previous state of existence. Sleepily I set things in order for a real breakfast, a hot breakfast, a breakfast that should be cozy. Drowsily we ate, but contentedly. Everything since the night before seemed like a dream.

It still seems so. But of all the dream the most vivid part — more vivid even than the alarm clock, more real than my tumble into wetness — is the vision that remains with me of mist-swept marsh, all gray and green and yellow, with tawny haycocks and glimmerings of water and whirrings of wings and whistling bird notes and the salt smell of the sea.

Yes, Jonathan was right. Dawn hunting on the marshes is different, quite different.

XIV

In the Wake of the Partridge

"The kangaroo ran very fast,
I ran faster.
The kangaroo was very fat,
I ate him.
Kangaroo! Kangaroo!"

THIS, the hunting-song of the Australian Bushman, is the best one I know. Without disguise or adornment, it embodies the primitive hunting instinct that is in every one of us, whether we hunt people or animals or things or ideas.

Jonathan and I do not habitually hunt kangaroos, and our hunting, or at any rate my share in it, is not as uniformly successful as the Bushman's seems to have been. For our own uses we should have to amend the song something as follows: —

"The partridge-bird flew very fast,
I missed him.
The partridge-bird was very fat,
I ate — chicken.
Partridge-bird! Partridge-bird!"

But we do not measure the success of our

hunting by the size of our bag. The chase, the day out of doors, two or three birds at the most out of the dozen we flush, this is all that we ask. But then, we have a chicken-yard to fall back upon, which the Bushman had not.

We sit before a blazing open fire, eating a hunter's breakfast — which means, nearly everything in the pantry. Coffee and toast are all very well for ordinary purposes, but they are poor things to carry you through a day's hunting, especially our kind of hunting. For a day's hunt with us is not an elaborate and well-planned affair. It does not mean a pre-arranged course over "preserved" territory, with a rendezvous at noon where the luncheon wagon comes, bringing out vast quantities of food, and taking home the morning's bag of game. It means a day's hunt that follows whither the birds lead, in a section of New England that is considered "hunted out," over ground sometimes familiar, sometimes wholly new, with no luncheon but a few crackers or a sandwich that has been stowed away in one of Jonathan's game pockets all the morning, and perhaps an apple or two, picked up in passing, from some old orchard

now submerged in the woods — a hunt ending only when it is too dark to shoot, with perhaps a long tramp home again after that. No, coffee and toast would never do!

As we turn out of the sheltered barnyard through the bars and up the farm lane, the keen wind flings at us, and our numb fingers recoil from the metal of our guns and take a careful grip on the wood. At once we fall to discussing the vital question — Where will the birds be to-day? For the partridges, as the New Englander calls our ruffed grouse, are very fastidious about where they spend their days. Sometimes they are all in the swamps, sometimes they are among the white birches of the hillsides, sometimes in the big woods, sometimes on the half-wooded rock ledges, sometimes among the scrub growth of lately cut timberland, and sometimes, in very cold weather, on the dry knolls where the cedars huddle — the warm little brooding cedars that give the birds shelter as a hen does her chicks.

When I first began to hunt with Jonathan, he knew so much more than I in these matters that I always accepted his judgment. If he

said, "To-day they will be in the swamps," I responded, "To the swamps let us go." But after a time I came to have opinions of my own, and then the era of discussion set in.

"To-day," begins Jonathan judicially, "the wind is north, and the birds will be on the south slopes close to the swamp bottoms to keep warm."

"Now, Jonathan, you know I don't a bit believe in going by the wind. The partridges don't mind wind, their feathers shed it. What they care about is the sun, and to-day the sun is hot,—at least," with a shiver, "it would be if we had feathers on instead of canvas. *I* believe we shall find them in the big woods."

I usually advocate the big woods, because I like them best for a tramp.

Jonathan, too well content at the prospect of a day's hunt to mind contradiction, says genially, "All right; I'll go wherever you say."

Which always reduces me to terms at once. Above all things, I dislike to make myself answerable for the success or failure of the day. I prefer irresponsible criticism beforehand —

and afterwards. So I say hastily, "Oh, no, no! Of course you know a great deal more than I do. We'll go wherever you think best."

"Well, perhaps it *is* too warm for the swamps to-day. Now, they might be in the birches."

"Oh, dear! *Don't* let's go to the birches! The birds can't be there. They never are."

"I thought we were going to go where I thought best."

"Yes—but only not to the birches. It's all a private myth of yours about their being there."

"Is it a private myth of mine that you shot those two woodcock in the birches of the upper farm last year? And how about that big gray partridge —"

"Well — of course — that was later in the season. I suppose the birds do eat birch buds when everything else gives out."

And so I criticize, having agreed not to. But it's good for Jonathan; it makes him careful.

"Well, shall it be the swamp?"

"No; if you really *think* they're in the birches, we'll go there. Besides, the swamp

seems a little — chilly — to begin with. Wait till I've seen a bird. Then I shan't mind so."

"Then you do admit it's a cool morning?"

"To paddle in a swamp, yes. The birds don't have to paddle."

We try the birches, and the pretty things whip our faces with their slender twigs in their own inimitable fashion, peculiarly trying to my temper. I can never go through birches long without growing captious.

"Jonathan," I call, as I catch a glimpse of his hunting-coat through an opening, "I thought the birds were in the birches this morning. They don't seem really abundant."

Jonathan, unruffled, suggests that I go along on the edge of the woods while he beats out the middle with the dog, which magnanimous offer shames me into silent if not cheerful acquiescence. Suddenly — *whr-r-r* — something bursts away in the brush ahead of us. "Mark!" we both call, and, "Did you get his line?" My critical spirit is stilled, and I am suddenly fired with the instinct to follow, follow! It is indeed a primitive instinct, this of the chase. No matter how tired one is, the impulse of pursuit is there. At the close of

a long day's hunt, after fifteen miles or so of hard tramping, — equal to twice that of easy walking, — when my feet are heavy and my head dull, I have never seen a partridge fly without feeling ready, eager, to follow anywhere.

After we move the first bird, it is follow my leader! And a wild leader he is. Flushed in the birches, he makes straight for the swamp. The swamp it is, then, and down we go after him, and in we go — ugh! how shivery the first plunge is — straight to the puddly heart of it, carefully keeping our direction. We go fast at first, then, when we have nearly covered the distance a partridge usually flies, we begin to slow down, holding back the too eager dog, listening for the snap of a twig or the sound of wings, gripping our guns tighter at every blue jay or robin that flicks across our path. No bird yet; we must have passed him; perhaps we went too far to the left. But no — *whr-r-r!* *Where* is he? There! Out of the top of a tall swamp maple, off he goes, sailing over the swamp to the ridge beyond. No wonder the dog was at sea. Well — we know his line, we are off again after him in

spite of the swamp between, with its mud and its rotten tree trunks and its grapevines and its cat briers.

Up on the ridge at last, we hunt close, find him, get a shot, probably miss, and away we go again. Some hunters, used to a country where game is plenty, will not follow a bird if they miss him on the first rise. They prefer to keep on their predetermined course and find another. But for me there is little pleasure in that kind of sport. What I enjoy most is not shooting, but hunting. The chase is the thing—the chase after a particular bird once flushed, the setting of my wits against his in the endeavor to follow up his flight. We have now and then flushed the same bird nine or ten times before we got him—and we have not always got him then. For many and deep are the crafty ways of the old partridge, and we have not yet learned them all. That is why I like partridge-hunting better than quail or woodcock, though in these you get far more and better shooting. Quail start in a bunch, scatter, fly, and drop where you can flush them again, one at a time; woodcock fly in a zigzag, drop where they happen to, and

sit still till you almost step on them. But the partridge thinks as he flies—thinks to good advantage. He seems to know what we expect him to do, and then he does something else. How many times have we gone past him when he sat quietly between us, and then heard him fly off stealthily down our back track! How often, in a last desperate search for a vanished bird, have I jumped on every felled cedar top in a field—except the one he was under! How often have I broken open my gun to climb a stone wall, — for we are cautious folk, Jonathan and I, — and, as I stood in perilous balance, seen a great bird burst out from under my very feet! How often — but I am not going to be tempted into telling hunting-stories. For some reason or other, hunting-stories chiefly interest the narrator. I have watched sportsmen telling tales in the evenings, and noted how every man but the speaker grows restive as he watches for a chance to get in his own favorite yarn.

And it is not the partridges alone with whom we grow acquainted. We have glimpses, too, of the other outdoor creatures. The life of the woods slips away from us as we pass, but only

just out of sight, and not always that. The blue jays scream in the tree-tops, officiously proclaiming us to the woods; the chickadees, who *must* see all that goes on, hop close beside us in the bushes; the gray squirrel dodges behind a tree trunk with just the corner of an eye peering at us around it. The chipmunk darts into the stone wall, and doubtless looks at us from its safe depths; the rabbit gallops off from the brier tangle or the brush heap, or sits up, round-eyed, thinking, little silly, that we don't see him. Once I saw a beautiful red fox who leaped into the open for a moment, stood poised, and leaped on into the brush; and once, as I sat resting, a woodchuck, big and uncombed, hustled busily past me, so close I could have touched him. He did not see me, and seemed so preoccupied with some pressing business that I should hardly have been surprised to see him pull a watch out of his pocket, like Alice's rabbit, and mutter, "I shall be late." I had not known that the wood creatures ever felt hurried except when pursued. Another time I was working up the slope on the sunny edge of a run, and, as I drew myself up over the edge of a big rock, I

found myself face to face — nose to nose — with a calm, mild-eyed, cottontail rabbit. He did not remain calm; in fact, we were both startled, but he recovered first, and hopped softly over the side of the rock, and went galloping away through the brushy bottom, while I, still kneeling, watched him disappear just as Jonathan came up.

“What’s the joke?”

“Nothing, only I just met a rabbit. He sat here, right here, and he was so rabbit-y! He looked at me just like an Easter card.”

“Why did n’t you shoot him?”

“I never thought of it. I wish you had seen how his nose twiddled! And, anyhow, I would n’t shoot anything sitting up that way, like a tame kitten.”

“Then why did n’t you shoot when he ran?”

“Shoot a rabbit running! Running in scallops! I could n’t.”

The fact is, I should n’t shoot a rabbit anyway, unless driven by hunger. I am not humane, but merely sentimental about them because they are soft and pretty. Once, indeed, when I found all my beautiful heads of

lettuce neatly nibbled off down to the central stalks, I almost hardened my heart against them, but the next time I met one of the little fellows I forgave him all.

I believe that one of the very best things about our way of following a partridge is the sense of intimacy with the countryside which it creates — an intimacy which nothing else has ever given us. In most outdoor faring one sticks to the roads and paths, in fishing one keeps to the water-courses, in cross-country tramping one unconsciously goes around obstacles. Nothing but the headlong and undeviating pursuit of a bird along a path of his choosing would ever have given me that acquaintance with ledge and swamp and laurel copse that I now possess. I know our swamp as a hippopotamus might, or — to stick to plain Yankee creatures — a mud turtle. It is a very swampy swamp, with spring holes and channels and great shallow pools where the leaves from the tall swamp maples — scarlet and rose and ashes of roses — sift slowly down and float until they sink into the leaf mould beneath. I have favorite paths through it as the squirrels have in the tree-tops; I know

where the mud is too deep to venture, where the sprawling, moss-covered roots of the maples offer grateful support; I know the brushy edges where the blossoming witch-hazel fills the air with its quaint fragrance; I know the sunny, open places where the tufted ferns, shoulder high, and tawny gold after the early frosts, give insecure but welcome footing; I know — too well indeed — the thickets of black alder that close in about me and tug at my gun and drive me to fury.

Yes, we know that swamp, and other swamps only less well. We know the rock ledges, the big dry woods of oak and chestnut and maple and beech. We know the ravines where the great hemlocks keep the air always dim and still, and one goes silent-footed over the needle floor. We grow familiar, too, with all the little things about the country. We discover new haunts of the fringed gentian, the wonderful, the capricious, with its unbelievable blue that one sees nowhere else save under the black lashes of some Irish eyes. We find the shy spring orchids, gone to seed now, but we remember and seek them out again next May. We surprise the spring

flowers in their rare fall blossoming — violets white and blue in the warm, moist bottom-lands, sand violets on the dry knolls, daisies, hepaticas, buttercups, and anemones — I have seen all these in a single day in raw November. We learn where the biggest chestnuts grow — great silky brown fellows almost twice the size of Jonathan's thumb. We discover old landmarks in the deep woods, surveyors' posts, a heap of stones carefully piled on a big rock. We find old clearings, overgrown now, but our feet still feel underneath the weeds the furrows left by the plow. Now and then we come upon a spot where once there must have been a home. There is no house, no timbers even, but the stone cellar is not wholly obliterated, and the gnarled lilac-bush and the apple tree stubbornly cling to a worn-out life amidst the forest of young white oaks and chestnuts that has closed in about them. Once we came upon a little group of gravestones, only three or four, sunken in the ground and so overgrown and weather-worn that we could read nothing. There was no sign of a human habitation, but I suppose they must have been placed there in the old

days when the family burial-ground was in one corner of the farm itself.

We learn to know where the springs of pure water are, welling up out of the deep ground in a tiny pool under some big rock or between the roots of a great yellow birch tree. And when the sun shines hot at noon, and a lost trail and a vanished bird leave us to the sudden realization that we are tired and thirsty, we know where is the nearest water. We know, too, the knack of drinking so as not to swallow the little gnats that skim its surface — you must blow them back ever so gently, and drink before they close in again. How good it tastes as we lie at full length on the matted brown leaves! How good the crackers taste, too, and the crisp apples, as we sit by the spring and rest, and talk over the morning's hunt and plan the afternoon's — subject to the caprices of the birds.

But I suppose the very best about hunting can never be told at all. That is true of any really good thing, and there is nothing better than a long day after the birds. It is always good to be out of doors. And there are seasons when one is glad to wander slowly over the

fields and byways; there are times when it seems best of all to be still — in the heart of the woods, on the wide hill pastures, in the deep grass of the meadows. But not in the fall! Is it a breath of the migrating instinct that makes us want to be off and away, to go, and go, and go? Yes, fall is the time for the hunt — gay, boisterous fall, rioting in wind and color to keep up its spirits against the stealthy approach of winter. And whether we shoot well or ill, whether our game pockets are heavy or light, no matter what the weather we find or the country we cross, it is all good hunting, very good. And at night we come in to a blazing fire, feeling tired, oh, so tired! and hungry, oh, so hungry! and with soul and body shriven clean by wind and sun.

XV

Beyond the Realm of Weather

OUR friends say to us now and then, "But why must you do these things with a gun? Why can't you do the same things and leave the gun at home?" Why, indeed? When I put this question to Jonathan, he smokes on placidly. But of one thing I am sure: if it had not been for the guns and the ducks, I should never have known what the marshes were like in winter fog — what they were like under a winter sky with a wind straight from the North Pole sweeping over their bare stretches.

It was early afternoon. Through the study window I looked out upon a raw, foggy world, melting snow underfoot and overhead. It was the kind of day about which even the most deliberately cheerful can find little to say except that this sort of thing can't last forever, you know. However, if I had had a true instinct for "nature," I should, I suppose, have seen at a glance that it was just the day to go

and lie in a marsh. But this did not occur to me. Instead, I thought of open fires, and popcorn, and hot peanuts, and novels, and fudge, and other such things, which are supposed to be valuable as palliatives on days like these.

The telephone rang. "Oh, it's you, Jonathan! . . . What? No, not really! You would n't! . . . Well, if the ducks like it, they may have it all. I'm not a duck. . . . Why, of course, if you really want me to, I'll go, only . . . All right, I'll get out the things. . . . Three o'clock train? You'll have to hurry!"

I hung up the receiver and sat a moment, dazed, looking out at the reek of weather. Then I shook myself and darted upstairs to the hunting-closet. In half an hour the bag was packed and Jonathan was at the door. In an hour we were on the train, and at twilight we were tramping out into a fog-swept marsh. Grayness was all around us; underfoot was mud, glimmering patches of soft snow, and the bristly stubble of the close-cut marsh grass.

"What fools we are!" I murmured.

"Why?" said Jonathan contentedly.

"Oh, if you can't see—" I said.

And then, suddenly, as we walked, my whole attitude changed. The weather, as weather, seemed something that belonged in a city — very far away, and no concern of mine. This was n't weather, here where we walked; it was a gray and boundless world of mystery. We raised our heads high and breathed long, deep breaths as the fog drifted against our faces. We were aware of dim masses of huddling bushes, blurred outlines of sheds and fences. Then only the level marsh stretched out before us and around us.

"Can we find our way out again?" I murmured, though without real anxiety.

"Probably," said Jonathan. "Is n't it great! You feel as if you had a soul out here! By the way, what was it you said about fools?"

"I forget," I said.

We went on and on, I don't know just where or how long, until we came to the creek, where the tide sets in and out. I should have walked into it if Jonathan had n't held me back. As we followed it, there rose a hoarse, raucous "*Ngwak! ngwak! ngwak!*" and a great

rush of wings. Jonathan dropped on one knee, gun up, but we saw nothing.

"We'll settle down here," he said. "There'll be more coming in soon. Wait a minute — hold my gun." He disappeared in the fog, and came back with an armful of hay, taken from the heart of a haystack of whose existence he seemed, by some sixth or seventh sense, to be aware. "There! That'll keep you off the real marsh. Now settle down, and don't move, and listen with all your ears, and be ready. I'll go off a little way."

I sank down on the hay, and watched him melt into the grayness. I was alone in the dim marsh. There was no wind, no sound but the far-off whistle and rush of a train. I lay there and thought of nothing. I let myself be absorbed into the twilight. I did not even feel that I had a soul. I was nothing but a point of consciousness in the midst of a gray infinity.

Suddenly I was aware of a sound — a rapid pulsing of soft, high tone — too soft for a whistle, too high for a song, — pervasive, elusive; it was overhead, it was beside me, behind me, where? Ah—it was wings! The winnowing of wings! I half rose, grasping my gun, with

a sense of responsibility to Jonathan. But my vision was caught in the grayness as in a web. The sound grew clearer, then fainter, then it passed away. The twilight gathered, and the fog partly dissolved. A fine rain began to fall, and in the intense silence I could hear the faint pricking of the drops on the stiff marsh stubble. I had thought the patter of rain on a roof was the stillest sound I knew, but this was stiller. Again came the winnowing of wings—again and again; and sometimes I was able to see the dark shapes passing overhead and vanishing almost before they appeared. Now and then I heard the muffled, flat sound of Jonathan's gun—he was evidently living up to his opportunities better than I was. Occasionally, in a spasm of activity, I shot too.

Until night closed in about us that sound of wings filled the air, and I knelt, listening and watching. It is strange how one can be physically alert while yet one's soul is withdrawn, quiet and receptive. Out of this state, as out of a trance, I was roused by the sense of Jonathan's dim bulk, seeming "larger than mortal," as he emerged from the night.

"Cold?" he said.

"I don't know — no, of course I'm not." I found it hard to lay hold on clear ideas again.

"I heard you shoot. Get any?"

"I think I hurried them a little."

We started back. At least I suppose it was back, because after a while we came to the road we had left. I was conscious only of bewildering patches of snow that lay like half-veiled moonlight on the dark stretches of the marsh. At last a clump of cedars made themselves felt rather than seen. "There's the fence corner! We're all right," said Jonathan. A snow-filled horse rut gave faint guidance, the twigs of the hedgerow lightly felt of our faces as we passed. We found the main road, and it led us through the quiet, fog-bound village, whose house lights made tiny blurs on the mist, to the hot, bright little station. Then came the close, flaringly lighted car, and people—commuters—getting on and off, talking about the "weather," and filling the car with the smell of wet newspapers and umbrellas. We had returned to the land of "weather." Yet it did not really touch us. It

seemed a dream. The reality was the marsh, with its fog and its pricking raindrops and its sentinel cedars, its silence and its wings.

In the days that followed, the fog passed, and there were long, warm rains. The marsh called us, but we could not go. Then the sky cleared, the wind rose, the mercury began to drop. Jonathan looked across the luncheon table and said, "What about ducks?"

"Can you get off?" I asked joyously.

"I can't, but I will," he replied.

And this time — Did I think I knew the marsh? Did I suppose, having seen it at dawn in the fall days when the sun still rises early, having seen it in winter twilight, fog-beset, that I knew it? Do I suppose I know it now? At least I know it better, having seen it under a clearing sky, when the cold wind sweeps it clean, and the air, crystalline, seems like a lens through which one looks and sees a revelation of new things.

As we struck into the marsh, just at sundown, my first thought was a rushing prayer for words, for colors, for something to catch and hold the beauty of it. But there are no words, no colors. No one who has not seen

it can know what a New England shore marsh can be in winter under a golden sky.

Winter does some things for us that summer cannot do. Summer gives us everything all at once — color, fragrance, line, sound — in an overwhelming exuberance of riches. And it is good. But winter — Ah, winter is an artist, winter has reserves; he selects, he emphasizes, he interprets. Winter says, "I will give you nothing to-day but brown and white, but I will glorify these until you shall wonder that there can be any beauty except thus." And again winter says: "Did you think the world was brown and white? Lo, it is blue and rose and silver — nothing else!" And we look, and it is so. On that other evening, in the fog, the world had been all gray — black-gray and pale gray and silver gray. On this evening winter said: "Gray? Not at all. You shall have brown and gold. Behold and marvel!"

I marveled. There was a sweep of golden marsh, under a gold sky, and at its borders low lines of trees etched in rich brown masses, and my sentinel cedars standing singly or by twos and threes — cedars in their winter

tones of olive brown, dull almost to harshness, holding themselves stiffly against the great wind, yielding only at their delicate tips when the gusts came, recovering again in the lulls, to point dauntlessly skyward. The narrow boundary ditches, already glassing over in the sudden cold, stretched away in rigid lines, flashing back the light of the sky in shivers of gold. The haystacks reiterated the color notes — gold on their sunset side, deep brown on their shadowed one.

There is a moment sometimes, just at sundown, when the quality of light changes. It does not fall upon the world from without, it radiates from within. Things seem self-luminous. Yet, for all their brightness, we see them less clearly, one's vision is dazzled, enmeshed. It is the time when that wondrous old word "faerie" finds its meaning. It is a magic moment. It laid its spell upon us.

Jonathan emerged first, bracing himself. "It will shut down soon. We have n't a minute to spare. We ought to be on the creek now."

It was hard to believe that such brightness could ever shut down. But it did. By the time

we reached the creek the gold had vanished, except for a narrow line in the western sky. The world lay in clear, brown twilight, and the wind swept over it.

Jonathan got more hay, and this time I saw the haystack from which he plucked it. I threw myself on it, collar up, cap down, lying as low as possible.

“Bad night for ducks, of course,” growled Jonathan. “If only the thaw had held twelve hours more! However —”

He swung off to some chosen spot of his own.

I lay there and the wind surged over me. There was nothing to stop it, nothing to make it noisy. It sang a little around the flap of my coat, it swished a little in the short marsh grass, but chiefly it rushed by above me, in invisible, soundless might. It seemed as if it must come between me and the stars, but it did not, and I watched them appear, at first one by one, then in companies and cohorts, until the sky was powdered with them. Now and then a dark line of ducks streamed over me, high up, in direct, steady flight, but the sound of their wings was swallowed up by the

wind. I did not even try to shoot; I was trying to find myself in an elemental world that seemed bigger and more powerful than I had ever conceived it.

Gradually I realized that I was cold. The wind seemed suddenly to have become aware of me. It roared down upon me, it shook me, worried me, let me go, and pounced upon me again in the sport of power. I said to myself, "I cannot resist, I will give myself up to it absolutely." I stopped feeling cold. I was no more than a ship's timber lying on the shore — with just a centre, a point of consciousness somewhere inside, to be aware of the difference between the elements and the something I knew was myself.

But at last I moved. It was fatal. A wave of cold started, pricking somewhere in my head, and undulated sinuously through me, down to my feet. More waves followed; they careered through me. I considered them with interest. Then they settled into aches at all the extremities. All at once it ceased to be interesting, and became a personal grievance — against the wind? the ducks? No — Jonathan! Of course it was Jonathan's fault. Why

did n't he come? I gazed into the twilight where he had disappeared. I could n't go and hunt for him, because I should certainly get lost or fall into a ditch. Ah! What was that? The long red flash of a gun! — another! — then the double report! Well, of course, if he were shooting, I would suspend judgment a reasonable time.

But it seemed quite an unreasonable time before I felt the impact of his tread on the springy marsh floor. I rose stiffly, feeling cross.

“Did you think I was never coming?”

“I can't think. My brains are stiff.”

“I was delayed. I dropped one in the ditch. He was only wounded. I couldn't leave him.”

“Then you got some?”

“Feel!”

I felt his game pockets. “One, two — oh, three! I did n't hear you shoot except twice. Well” — I was stamping and flinging my arms around myself in the endeavor to thaw out — “I think they're very well off: they're bound for a warm oven.”

“Cold? Thunder! I ought to have left you the bottle. Here!”

I took it and gulped, protesting: "Detestable stuff! Wait, I'll take some more."

"This from you! You *must* be cold! Come on! Run! Look out for the little ditches! Jump where I do."

We started stiffly enough, in the teeth of the big, dark wind, till the motion, and the bottle, began to take effect. A haymow loomed. We flung ourselves, panting, against it, and, sinking back into its yielding bulk, drew long breaths.

"Did we think it was cold?" I murmured; "or windy?"

We were on the leeward side of it, and it gave generous shelter. The wind sighed gently over the top of the mow, breathed past its sides, never touching us, and we gazed up at the stars.

"The sky is fairly gray with them," I said.

"Perhaps," said Jonathan lazily, "it's that bottle, making you see ten stars grow where one grew before."

"Perhaps," I suggested, choosing to ignore this speech, "it's the wind, blowing the stars around and raising star-dust."

We lay in our protecting mow, and the

warmth of our bodies drew out of it faint odors of salt hay. We did not talk. There are times when one seems to exist in poise, with eternity on all sides. One's thoughts do not move, they float.

"Well?" said Jonathan at last.

I could hear the hay rustle as he straightened up.

"Don't interrupt," I answered.

But my spirit had come down to earth, and after the first jolt I realized that, as usual, Jonathan was right.

We plunged out again into the buffeting wind and the starlit darkness, and I followed blindly as Jonathan led across the marshes, around pools, over ditches, until we began to see the friendly twinkle of house lights on the edge of the village. On through the lanes to the highroad, stumbling now and then on its stiffened ruts and ridges. As houses thickened the gale grew noisy, singing in telephone wires, whistling around barn corners, slamming blinds and doors, and rushing in the tree-tops.

"O for that haymow!" I gasped.

"The open fire will be better." Jonathan flung back comfort across the wind.

Ten minutes later we had made harbor in the little house by the shore. The candles were lighted, the fire set ablaze, and as we sat before it cooking chops and toast I said, "No, Jonathan, the open fire is n't any better than the haymow."

"But different?" he suggested.

"Yes, quite different."

"And good in its own poor way."

He turned his chop. Chops and toast and a blazing fire give forth odors of distracting pleasantness under such circumstances.

"I think," I said, "that each gives point to the other."

"Are n't you glad I took you for ducks?" he asked.

I mused, watching my toast. "I suppose," I said, "no one in his senses would leave a comfortable city house to go and lie out in a marsh at night, in a forty-mile gale, with the mercury at ten, unless he had some other motive than the thing itself—ducks, or conspiracy, or something. And yet it is the thing itself that is the real reward."

"Is n't that true of almost everything?" said Jonathan.

XVI

Comfortable Books

JONATHAN methodically tucked his bookmark into "The Virginians," and, closing the fat green volume, began to knock the ashes out of his pipe against the bricked sides of the fireplace.

"'The Virginians' is a very comfortable sort of book," he remarked.

"Is it?" I said. "I wonder why."

He ruminated. "Well, chiefly, I suppose, because it's so good and long. You get to know all the people, you get used to their ways, and when they turn up again, after a lot of chapters, you don't have to find out who they are — you just feel comfortably acquainted."

I sighed. I had just finished a magazine story — condensed, vivid, crushing a whole life-tragedy into seven pages and a half. In that space I had been made acquainted with sixteen different characters, seven principal

ones and the rest subordinate, but all clearly drawn. I had found it interesting, stimulating; as a *tour de force* it was noteworthy even among the crowd of short-stories — all condensed, all vivid, all interesting — that had appeared that month. But — comfortable? No. And I felt envious of Jonathan. He had been reading “The Virginians” all winter. His bookmark was at page 597, and there were 803 pages in all, so he had a great deal of comfort left.

Perhaps comfort is not quite all that one should expect from one’s reading. Certainly it is the last thing one gets from the perusal of our current literature, and any one who reads nothing else is missing something which, whether he realizes it or not, he ought for his soul’s sake to have — something which Jonathan roughly indicated when he called it “comfort.” The ordinary reader devours short-stories by the dozen, by the score — short short-stories, long short-stories, even short-stories laboriously expanded to a volume, but still short-stories. He glances, less frequently, at verses, chiefly quatrains, at columns of jokes, at popularized bits of history

and science, at bits of anecdotal biography, and nowhere in all this medley does he come in contact with what is large and leisurely. Current literature is like a garden I once saw. Its proud owner led me through a maze of smooth-trodden paths, and pointed out a vast number of horticultural achievements. There were sixty-seven varieties of dahlias, there were more than a hundred kinds of roses, there were untold wonders which at last my weary brain refused to record. Finally I escaped, exhausted, and sought refuge on a hillside I knew, from which I could look across the billowing green of a great rye-field, and there, given up to the beauty of its manifold simplicity, I invited my soul.

It is even so with our reading. When I go into one of our public reading-rooms, and survey the serried ranks of magazines and the long shelves full of "Recent fiction, not to be taken out for more than five days," — nay, even when I look at the library tables of some of my friends, — my brain grows sick and I long for my rye-field.

Happily, there always is a rye-field at hand to be had for the seeking. Jonathan finds re-

fuge from business and the newspapers in his pipe and "The Virginians." I have no pipe, but I sit under the curling rings of Jonathan's, and I, too, have my comfortable books, my literary rye-fields. Last summer it was Malory's "Morte d'Arthur," whose book I found indeed a comfortable one—most comfortable. I read much besides, many short stories of surpassing cleverness and some of real excellence, but as I look back upon my summer's literary experience, all else gives place to the long pageant of Malory's story, gorgeous or tender or gay, seen like a fair vision against the dim background of an old New England apple orchard. Surely, though the literature of our library tables may sometimes weary me, it shall never enslave me.

But they must be read, these "comfortable" books, in the proper fashion, not hastily, nor cursorily, nor with any desire to "get on" in them. They must lie at our hand to be taken up in moments of leisure, the slowly shifting bookmark—there should always be a bookmark—recording our half-reluctant progress. (I remember with what dismay I found myself arrived at the fourth and last

volume of Malory.) Thus read, thus slowly woven among the intricacies and distractions of our life, these precious books will link its quiet moments together and lend to it a certain quality of largeness, of deliberation, of continuity.

For it is surely a mistake to assume, as people so often do, that in a life full of distractions one should read only such things as can be finished at a single sitting and that a short one. It is a great misfortune to read only books that "must be returned within five days." For my part, I should like to see in our public libraries, to offset the shelves of such books, other shelves, labeled "Books that may and should be kept out six months." I would have there Thackeray and George Eliot and Wordsworth and Spenser, Malory and Homer and Cervantes and Shakespeare and Montaigne — oh, they should be shelves to rejoice the soul of the harassed reader!

No, if one can read but little, let him by all means read something big. I know a woman occupied with the demands of a peculiarly exigent social position. Finding her one day reading "The Tempest," I remarked on her

enterprise. "Not a bit!" she protested. "I am not reading it to be enterprising, I am reading it to get rested. I find Shakespeare so peaceful, compared with the magazines." I have another friend who is taking entire charge of her children, besides doing a good deal of her own housework and gardening. I discovered her one day sitting under a tree, reading Matthew Arnold's poems, while the children played near by. I ventured to comment on what seemed to me the incongruity of her choice of a book. "But don't you see," she replied, quickly. "That is just why! I am so busy from minute to minute doing lots of little practical, temporary things, that I simply have to keep in touch with something different — something large and quiet. If I did n't, I should die!"

I suppose in the old days, in a less "literary" age, all such busy folk found this necessary rest and refreshment in a single book — the Bible. Doubtless many still do so, but not so many; and this, quite irrespective of religious considerations, seems to me a great pity. The literary quality of the Scriptures has, to be sure, been partly vitiated by the

lamentable habit of reading them in isolated "texts," instead of as magnificent wholes; yet, even so, I feel sure that this constant intercourse with the Book did for our predecessors in far larger measure what some of these other books of which I have been speaking do for us—it furnished that contact with greatness which we all crave.

It may be accident, though I hardly think so, that to find such books we must turn to the past. Doubtless others will arise in the future—possibly some are even now being brought to birth, though this I find hard to believe. For ours is the age of the short-story—a wonderful product, perhaps the finest flower of fiction, and one which has not yet achieved all its victories or realized all its possibilities. All the fiction of the future will show the influence of this highly specialized form. In sheer craftsmanship, novel-writing has progressed far; in technique, in dexterous manipulation of their material, the novices of to-day are ahead of the masters of yesterday. This often happens in an art, and it is especially true just now in the art of fiction. Yes, there are great things preparing for us in the

future, there are excellent things being done momentarily about us. But while we wait for the great ones, the excellent ones sometimes create in us a sense of surfeit. We cannot hurry the future, and if meanwhile we crave repose, leisure, quiet, steadiness, the sense of magnitude, we must go to the past. There, and not in the yearly output of our own publishers, we shall find our "comfortable" books.

XVII

In the Firelight

JONATHAN had improvidently lighted his pipe before he noticed that the fire needed his attention. This was a mistake, because, at least in Jonathan's case, neither a fire nor a pipe responds heartily to a divided mind. As I watched him absently knocking the charred logs together, I longed to snatch the tongs from his indifferent hands and "change the sorry scheme of things entire." Big wads of smoke rolled nonchalantly out of the corners of the fireplace and filled the low ceiling with bluish mist, yet I held my peace, and I did not snatch the tongs. I know of no circumstances wherein advice is less welcome than when offered by a woman to a man on his knees before the fire. When my friends make fudge or rare-bits, they invite criticism, they court suggestion, but when one of them takes the tongs in his hand, have a care what you say to him! In our household a certain con-

vention of courtesy — fireplace etiquette — has tacitly established itself, in accordance with which the person who wields the tongs, assuming full responsibility for results, is free from criticism or suggestion. Disregard of such etiquette may not have precipitated divorce, but I have known it to produce distinctly strained relations. And so, while Jonathan tinkered in a half-hearted way at the fire, I ruled my tongue. At last, little vanishing blue flickers began to run along the log edges, growing steadier and yellower until they settled into something like a blaze.

Jonathan straightened up, but there was a trace of the apologetic in his tone as he said, "That'll do, won't it?"

"Why, yes," I replied cautiously, "it's a fire."

"Well, what's the matter with it?" he asked tolerantly.

"Since you press me, I should say that it lacks — style."

Jonathan leaned back, puffing comfortably — "Now, what in thunder do you mean by style?"

But I was not to be enticed into an empty discussion of terms. "Well, then, say frowsy. Call it a frowsy fire. You know what frowsy means, I suppose. Of course, though, I don't mean to criticize, only you asked me." And I added, with perhaps unnecessary blandness, "I'm *warm* enough."

Jonathan smoked a few moments more, possibly by way of establishing his independence, then slowly rose, remarking, "Oh, well, if you *want* a stylish fire —"

"I did n't say stylish, I said style —"

But he was gone. He must have journeyed out to the woodshed, — however, there was a moon, — for he returned bearing a huge backlog. He had been magnanimous, indeed, for it was the sort that above all others delights my heart — a forked apple log with a big hollow heart. In a moment, I was on my knees clearing a place for it, and he swung it into position on the bed of embers, tucked in some white birch in front, and soon the flames were licking about the flaking gray apple bark and shooting up through the hollow fork in a fashion to charm the most fastidious.

People whose open fires are machine-fed

— who arrange for their wood as they do for their groceries, by telephone — know little of the real joys of a fire. It is laid by a servant, — unintelligently laid, — and upon such masses of newspaper and split kindling that it has no choice but to burn. The match is struck, the newspapers flare up, and soon there is a big, meaningless blaze. Handfuls of wood — just wood, any kind of wood — are thrown on from time to time, and perhaps a log or two — any log, taken at random from the woodbox. Truly, this is merest savagery, untrained, indiscriminating; it is the Bushman's meal compared to the Frenchman's dinner. Not thus are real hearth fires laid. Not thus are they enjoyed. You should plan a fire as you do a dinner party, and your wood, like your people, should be selected and arranged with due regard to age, temperament, and individual eccentricity. A fire thus skillfully planned, with some good talkers among the logs, may be as well worth listening to as the conversation about your table — perhaps better.

To get the full flavor of a fire you must know your wood — I had almost said, you

must remember where the tree stood before it was cut — white birch in the dry, worn-out slopes, black birches from the edges of the pasture lots, chestnut from the ledges, maple from the swamps, apple from the old orchard, oak cut in sorrow when the fullness of time has come, and burned with the honor due to royalty.

But though this may be a refinement of fancy, it is no fancy that one kind of wood differs from another in glory. There is the white birch, gay, light-hearted, volatile, putting all its pretty self into a few flaring moments — a butterfly existence. There is black birch, reluctant but steady; there is chestnut, vivacious, full of sudden enthusiasms; the apple, cheerful and willing; the maple and oak, sober and stanch, good for the long pull. Every locality has its own sorts of wood, as its own sorts of people. Mine is a New England wood basket, and as I look at it I recognize all my old friends. Of them all I love the apple best, yet each is in its own way good. For a quick blaze, throw on the white birch; for a long evening of reading, when one does not want distraction, pile on the oak and maple. They

will burn quietly, unobtrusively, importuning you neither for care nor appreciation. But for a fire to sit before with friends, bring in the apple wood. Lay the great backlog, the more gnarled the better, and if there is a hole through which the flames may shoot up, that is best of all — such logs we hoard for special occasions. Then with careful touch arrange the wood in front, your bundles of twigs, your pretty white birch sticks and your dry chestnut to start the fun, then the big apple forelog, the forestick and the backstick, not too much crowding or too much space. Ah, there is a seemly fire! There is a fire for friends!

For the renewal of old friendships, as for the perfecting of new ones, there is nothing like a fire. I met a friend after years of separation. We came together in a modern house, just modern enough to be full of steam pipes and registers and gas-logs, but not so modern as to have readopted open fireplaces. The room had no centre — there was no hearth to draw around, there was no reason for sitting in one place rather than another. We could not draw around the steam pipes or the register.

The gas-log was not turned on, it would have been too hot, and anyhow — a gas-log! We sat and talked for hours in an aimless, unsatisfactory sort of way. I felt as if we were, figuratively speaking, sitting on the edges of our chairs. It was better than nothing, but it was not a real meeting. The next year we were together again, but this time it was before our own blazing apple log. We did not talk so much as we had done before, but we were silent a great deal more, which was better. For in really intimate communion, silence is the last, best gift, but it cannot be forced, it cannot be snatched at. You may try it, but you grow restless, you begin to consider your expression, you wonder how long it will last, you fancy it may seem to mean too much, and at last you are hurried over into talk again. But before a fire all things are possible, even silence. Chance acquaintances and intimate friends fall alike under its spell, talk is absolutely spontaneous, it flows rapidly or slowly, or dies away altogether. What need for talk when the fire is saying it all — now flaring up in a blaze to interpret our rarest enthusiasms, now popping and snapping with wit or fury,

now burning with the even heat of steady, rational life, now settling into a contemplative glow of meditation.

In the circle of the hearth everything is good, but reminiscences are best of all. I sometimes think all life is valuable merely as an opportunity to accumulate reminiscences, and I am sure that the precious horde can be seen to best advantage by firelight. Then is the time for the miser to spread out his treasure and admire it. I remember once Jonathan and I were on a bicycle trip. My chain had broken and we had trudged eight long, hot, dusty miles to the river that had to be crossed that night. It was dark when we reached it, and it had begun to rain, a warm, dreary drizzle. As we stumbled over the railway track and felt our way past the little station toward the still smaller ferry-house, a voice from the darkness drawled, "Guess ye won't git the ferry to-night — last boat went half an hour ago."

It was the final blow. We leaned forlornly on our wheels and looked out upon the dark water, whose rain-quenched mirror dully reflected the lights of the opposite town. Finally

I said, "Well, Jonathan, anyhow, we're making reminiscences."

This remark was, I own, not highly practical, but I intended it to be comforting, and if it failed — as it clearly did — to cheer Jonathan, that was not because it lacked wisdom, but because men are so often devoid of imagination save as an adornment of their easy moments.

Finally the same impersonal voice out of the dark uttered another sentence: "Might row ye 'cross if ye've *got* to go to-night."

"How much?" said Jonathan.

"Guess it's wuth a dollar. Mean night to be out there."

We had, between us, forty-seven cents and three street-car tickets, good in the opposite town. All this we meekly offered him, and in the pause that followed I added desperately, "And we can each take an oar and help."

"Wall — I'll take ye."

It seemed to me that the voice suggested an accompanying grin, but I had no proof.

And so we got across. We never saw the face of our boatman, but on the other side we

felt for his hand and emptied our pockets into it — nickels and dimes and pennies, and the three car tickets; but as we were turning to grope our way up the dock the voice said, "Here — ye'll need two of them tickets to git home with. I do' want 'um."

Now already it must be evident to any one that my remark to Jonathan, though perhaps ill-timed, embodied a profound and cheering truth. The more uncomfortable you are, the more desperate your situation, the better the reminiscences you are storing up to be enjoyed before the fire.

Yes, there is nothing like firelight for reminiscences. By the clear light of morning — say ten o'clock — I might be forced to admit that life has had its humdrum and unpleasant aspects, but in the evening, with the candles lighted and the fire glowing and flickering, I will allow no such thing. The firelight somehow lights up all the lovely bits, and about the unlovely ones it throws a thick mantle of shadow, like the shadows in the corners of the room behind us. Nor does the firelight magic end here. Not only does it play about the fair hours of our past, making them fairer,

it also vaguely multiplies them, so that for one real occurrence we see many. It is like standing between opposing mirrors: looking into either, one sees a receding series of reflections, unending as Banquo's royal line.

Thus, once last winter Jonathan and I spent a long evening reading aloud a tale of the "Earthly Paradise." Once last summer we sat alone before the embers and quietly talked. Once and only once. Yet firelit memory is already laying her touch upon those hours. Already, though my diary tells me they stood alone, I am persuaded that they were many. I look back over a retrospect of many long winter evenings, in whose cozy light I see again the ringed smoke of Jonathan's pipe and hear again the lingering verse of the idle singer's tales; a retrospect of many long summer twilights, wherein the warmth of the settling embers mingles with the sharp coolness of a summer night, and pleasant talk gives place to pleasant silence.

The apple logs have burned through and rolled apart, the great backlog has settled deeper and deeper into the ashes. The fire whispers and murmurs, it whistles soft, low

notes, it chuckles and sighs, finally it sinks into reverie, stirring now and then to whisper "sh-h-h-h" lest we break the spell. Only the old clock in the hall refuses to yield, and soberly persists in its "tick-tock," "tick-tock." Jonathan's pipe is smoked out, but he does not fill it, and we sit there, looking deep into the rosy glow, and dreaming, dreaming —

THE END

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